DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 427 446 EC 307 008

AUTHOR Castleberry, Michael S.; Wald, Penelope J.; Sobel, Andrea

TITLE Project REALIGN Model Inservice Training Project. Final Report.

INSTITUTION George Washington Univ., Washington, DC. Dept. of Teacher Preparation and Special Education.

SPONS AGENCY Special Education Programs (ED/OSERS), Washington, DC. Early Education Program for Children with Disabilities.
PUB DATE 1999-01-15
NOTE 146p.
CONTRACT HO024P50038
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrators; *Disabilities; *Early Intervention; *Inclusive Schools; *Inservice Teacher Education; Instructional Improvement; *Leadership Training; Models; Parent Participation; Parent School Relationship; Professional Continuing Education; Staff Development; Teacher Collaboration; Training
IDENTIFIERS *Virginia (Fairfax County)

ABSTRACT

This final report describes activities and accomplishments of Project REALIGN, a three-year model inservice training project to expand the capacity of early childhood staff, administrators and families to work together toward improved education for all young children and maximizing the inclusion of young children with disabilities in the school community. The project has two primary components: (1) the inservice training process, a year-long school-based, staff-driven professional development effort to promote collaborative learning among professionals and parents; and (2) the facilitator development program, a program to prepare selected teachers to take leadership roles in the REALIGN inservice training process. Approximately 165 staff and parents from five public elementary schools in Fairfax County, Virginia, participated in the inservice training component. Fifteen teachers were trained as facilitators under the second component. Evaluation findings demonstrate positive outcomes at the individual level, the school community level, and the programmatic level. The project also resulted in development of two products and dissemination in various formats. Individual sections of the report address the project's goals and objectives, the inservice training component, the facilitator development component, project impact, and future activities. Appendices include sample program documents and evaluation instruments. (DB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 427 446

Project REALIGN
Model Inservice Training Project

Final Report

Early Education Program for Children with Disabilities
U. S. Department of Education
Grant Number HO24P50038
CFDA No. 84.024P

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Michael S. Castleberry, Ed.D.
Principal Investigator
Penelope J. Wald, Ed.D.
Project Director
Andrea Sobel, M.Ed.
Training Specialist

The George Washington University
Department of Teacher Preparation and Special Education
2134 G. St NW Fourth Floor
Washington, D.C. 20052

January 15, 1999

EC 307008

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Abstract

Project REALIGN

1995-1998

An Early Education Program for Children with Disabilities

Michael S. Castleberry, Ed.D.	Penelope J. Wald, Ed.D.	Andrea Sobel, M Ed.
Principal Investigator	Project Director	Training Specialist

Project REALIGN was a three-year model inservice training project funded by the U.S. Department of Education Early Education Programs for Children with Disabilities and sponsored by The George Washington University Department of Teacher Preparation and Special Education in partnership with Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) in Virginia. The purpose of Project REALIGN was to expand the capacity of early childhood staff, administrators and families to work together for the purpose of (1) enhancing the quality of education for all young children and (2) maximizing opportunities for young children with disabilities to be active members of the school community.

The desired outcome of REALIGN was the emergence of vibrant professional learning communities in schools—communities where individual and organizational growth occurred simultaneously. More specifically, REALIGN sought to increase the capacity of school staff in partnership with parents to:

- collaboratively create new strategies that were responsive to the diverse needs of students;
- include young children with disabilities as active members of the school community; and
- build knowledge and skills in areas that were personally meaningful and fulfilling.

REALIGN has two primary components: (1) the Inservice Training Process; and (2) the Facilitator Development Program. The Inservice Training Process, a school-based, staff-driven professional development approach enhances the capacity of the adults in the school to function as a powerful learning community and promotes collaborative learning among professionals and parents. The REALIGN Inservice Training Process spans the course of a year. Initially participants engage in community-building activities which: (1) encourage the exchange of personal goals and values, (2) promote deeper understanding of the diverse philosophical and pedagogical backgrounds, and (3) help identify a shared purpose and vision for the community. In the second stage, the community self-organizes into small collaborative learning teams. Each team identifies a topic to study and, over a six to eight month period, molds their topic into a collaborative project. Using a collaborative project approach provides participants with "real-life" opportunities to tinker with new instructional models or strategies for improving programs for children and families, as well as practice skills of collaborative learning.

From 1995 through 1998 approximately one hundred and sixty-five staff and parents from five public elementary schools in Fairfax County, Virginia participated in REALIGN's Inservice Training. Three schools targeted the early childhood staff, preschool through first grade, and two schools targeted their entire elementary school staff for training. Staff in all cases included general and special educators, related services providers, specialists, instructional assistants and administrators. Four of the five schools had parents as collaborative partners. Additionally,

fourteen teachers participated in a FCPS professional development course sponsored by REALIGN.

The Facilitator Development Program, the second component of REALIGN, prepared selected teachers to take leadership roles in the REALIGN Inservice Training Process. Fifteen FCPS teachers were trained as facilitators using a model that combined observation and study with practice and reflection. All fifteen facilitators successfully lead learning teams through the yearlong collaborative learning process.

Over the three years, the collaborative learning teams from the five REALIGN schools and the FCPS professional development course completed thirty-three projects which focused on (1) improved methods of meeting the diverse needs of students and (2) increased inclusive education opportunities for children with and without disabilities. These projects involved teaching staff who were responsible for the education of four hundred children with disabilities and nine hundred and fifty nine children without disabilities.

Evaluation findings demonstrated that the REALIGN collaborative learning process provided multiple avenues for individual, group, and school community growth. At the individual level, findings pointed to an increase in professional knowledge and personal confidence. At the school community level, findings highlighted enhanced relationships across disciplines, grade levels, and roles; an increased capacity for collective thinking; and enhanced ability to work collaboratively. At the programmatic level, participants reported using new approaches for meeting the diverse needs and abilities of children; increased opportunities for children with and without disabilities to share elementary education experiences; and enhanced family involvement and family support programs. Findings also identified six factors that participants felt were critical to successful collaborative learning experiences.

REALIGN staff and facilitators disseminated the REALIGN Inservice Training Model in various formats, including workshops, presentations, and poster sessions, at local, state, and national levels. Staff also developed two products: (1) a training guide entitled *Realigning Our Schools: Building Professional Learning Communities;* and (2) a Questionnaire on Integration and Collaboration.

Table of Contents

I. Goals and Objectives of the Project

II. REALIGN Inservice Training Process

- A. Model
- B. Participants
- C. Activities
- D. Methodological Adjustments
- E. Evaluation Findings

III. REALIGN Facilitator Development Program

- A. Model
- B. Participants
- C. Activities
- D. Methodological Adjustments
- E. Evaluation Findings

IV. Project Impact

- A. Dissemination Activities
- B. Continuation Activities
- C. Publications and Products
- D. Implications of Project Findings

V. Future Activities

VI. Assurances

APPENDICES

A. REALIGN Inservice Training Process Sample Documents
B. REALIGN Facilitator Development Program Sample Documents
C. REALIGN Evaluation Instruments

EXHIBITS

Exhibit I.1: Building Professional Learning Communities

Exhibit II.2: Collaborative Learning Process

Exhibit II.3: Demographic Information REALIGN Participants: 1995-1998

Exhibit II.4: Incremental Growth of Target Population and Impact on Children

Exhibit II.5: REALIGN Inservice Training Activities for 1995-96

Exhibit II.6: REALIGN Inservice Training Activities for 1996-97

Exhibit II.7: REALIGN Inservice Training Activities for 1997-98

Exhibit II.8: Collaborative Learning Project by School by Year

Exhibit II.9: Sample for Retrospective Interviews

Exhibit II.10 Project REALIGN Collaborative Learning Projects

Exhibit III.1: Facilitation: A Balancing of Tensions

Exhibit III.2: The Drexler/Sibbett Model of Stages of Group Performance

Exhibit III.3: Major Issues Associated with Each Stage of Group Performance

Exhibit III.4: Roles of Facilitator Candidates by Year

Exhibit III.5: Facilitator Development Activities 1995-1996

Exhibit III.6: Facilitator Development Activities 1996-1997

Exhibit III.7: Facilitator Development Activities 1997-1998

Exhibit III. 8: Demographics of Facilitator Candidates

Exhibit III.9: Stages of Concern about the Innovation

Exhibit III.10: Percentage of Concerns by Stage and Amount of Training

Exhibit III.11: Percentage of Concerns by Stage and Amount of Training

I. Goals and Objectives of the Project

Project REALIGN was a model inservice training project designed to expand the capacity of early childhood staff, administrators and families to work together for the purpose of: (1) enhancing the quality of education for all young children; and (2) maximizing opportunities for young children with disabilities to be active members of the school community. It was funded by the U. S. Department of Education from 1995 through 1998 and sponsored by The George Washington University (GWU) Department of Teacher Preparation and Special Education in partnership with the Fairfax County, Virginia, Public Schools (FCPS) Department of Instructional Services and Department of Student Services and Special Education.

The REALIGN Inservice Training Model is a school-based and staff-driven approach to staff development in which general and special education staff, families, and administrators work together on collaborative learning teams to improve the quality of education for all children in the school. The goals and objectives of Project REALIGN are listed below.

1.0 Develop, implement, and evaluate the REALIGN InserviceTraining Model

- 1.1 Develop the REALIGN Inservice Training Model
- 1.2 Recruit school sites and multidisciplinary teams
- 1.3 Implement the REALIGN Inservice Training Model
- 1.4 Evaluate the REALIGN Inservice Training Model

2.0 Develop, implement, and evaluate the REALIGN Facilitation Development Program

- 2.1 Develop REALIGN Facilitation Development Program
- 2.2 Recruit trainer candidates
- 2.3 Implement the REALIGN Facilitation Development Program
- 2.4 Evaluate REALIGN Facilitation Development Program

3.0 Disseminate the Project REALIGN Inservice Training Model

3.1 Design and produce project information materials

3.2 Disseminate model findings at local, state and national levels

3.3 Write and produce REALIGN InserviceTraining Manual with Facilitator's Notes

II. REALIGN Inservice Training Process

A. Model

Project REALIGN was a model inservice training project funded by the U.S. Department of Education and sponsored by The George Washington University Department of Teacher Preparation and Special Education in partnership with Fairfax County Public Schools in Virginia. The purpose of Project REALIGN was to enhance the capacity of early childhood staff, administrators and families to function as powerful professional learning communities committed to creating new strategies for meeting the diverse needs of all students in their schools. More specifically, REALIGN sought to increase the capacity of school staff in partnership with parents to:

- collaboratively create strategies that were responsive to the diverse needs of their students;
- include young children with disabilities as active members of their school community; and
- build knowledge and skills in areas that were personally meaningful and fulfilling.

Project REALIGN is based the premise that, if schools are to thrive, they must be institutions of learning for adults as well as children. REALIGN is grounded in the following beliefs:

- Every school is a unique aggregate of staff, children and families. The uniqueness of each school underscores the need for school-centered, staff-initiated professional development opportunities

- Schools thrive when given an in-depth opportunity to explore who they are as a community, who they want to become and how they can grow together.
- Collaborative learning among staff from diverse roles, grades, and disciplines is a key step towards creating programs that address the diverse needs of all learners. Staff need tools and opportunities to collaboratively understand and utilize the potential synergy that diversity offers.
- Successful schools are continuously engaged in dialogue about improving results for all children. In our nation the mission of public education is to maximize the potential of every student who enters the schoolhouse. To meet this challenge, schools must function as a fluid, flexible, interchangeable whole, always alert and responsive to the needs and interests of all children.

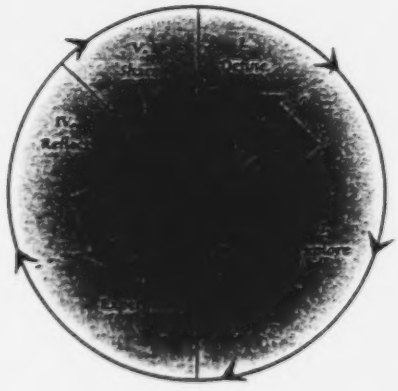
Two cornerstones of this professional development model are (1) schools as communities and (2) collaborative learning. Schools as communities provide the context for growth and change. The school community is a composite of people representing many ages, roles, backgrounds and dreams. Members of a well-functioning school community are aligned around common goals, shared values, and an agreed upon way of relating. This alignment of ideology forms the unique identity of community. It is from this ideological base that communities take action. It is through this community of mind that synergy arises.

Collaborative learning, the second cornerstone of this model, offers a process for simultaneously promoting individual and organizational capacity building. Collaborative learning assumes a shared focus, shared responsibility to learn, and a disciplined approach to acquiring the desired goal. It demands that individuals shed the expert role and adopt a collaborative approach that recognizes the values, knowledge, and expertise of all community

Through a dynamic, emergent process, REALIGN helps schools develop norms and structures which support the existence of adult learning communities committed to improving programs for all children. The REALIGN training spans the course of a year. Initially the training engages participants in community-building activities which: (1) encourage the exchange of personal goals and values, (2) promote deeper understanding of the diverse philosophical and pedagogical backgrounds of the participants, and (3) help participants identify a shared goal or vision for their community. An outcome of this stage is a shared vision of the future with specific actions or goals identified by the community.

In the second stage, the community self-organizes into small collaborative learning teams. Each team identifies a topic to study that is: (1) personally meaningful to each member of the project team and (2) aligned with the community's vision. For several months each learning team works together to mold their topic into a collaborative project. Using a collaborative project approach provides participants with "real-life" opportunities to tinker with new instructional models or strategies for improving programs for children and families, as well as practice skills of collaborative learning. Exhibit II.2 illustrates the collaborative learning process.

Exhibit II.2: Collaborative Learning Process

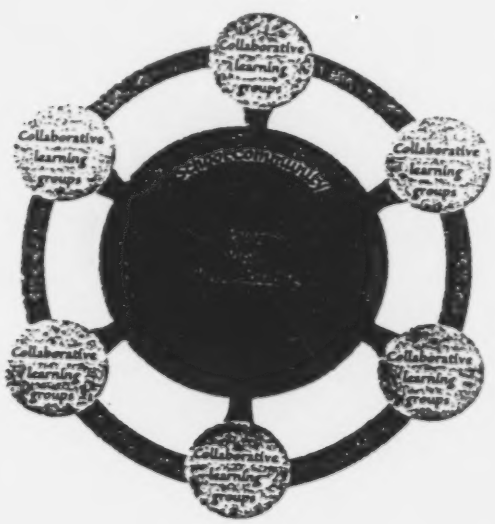


BEST COPY AVAILABLE

members. The collaborative learning process engages members of the community in a cycle of exploration, experimentation, and reflection relative to a specific outcome. The knowledge and skills that are generated through collaborative inquiry enriches the knowledge base of the school. From this bank of knowledge and expertise, improved programs and services are born.

The concepts of "schools as communities" and "collaborative learning" interact like an ever-expanding web. The community forms the central core of the web with a nucleus of values, vision and ways of relating. Collaborative learning represents the potential for growth and capacity building. Multiple opportunities for collaborative learning exist within a community. Community members are free to self-organize around topics of interest to them, yet they are guided by their community's core ideology. The result is a professional learning community connected by shared values and visions while nourished by high levels of energy and forward movement emanating from the work of multiple, self-organized collaborative learning groups.

Exhibit I.1: Building Professional Learning Communities



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The collaborative learning process concludes with the community coming together to celebrate the work that has been accomplished and to share insights. The sharing of these insights may signal a conclusion to the work of the collaborative learning team or may lead to a refining of goals and continued exploration and experimentation in the team's area of interest.

This concludes the overview of the REALIGN professional development process. The project training manual, *Realigning our Schools: Building Professional Learning Communities* offers a detailed discussion of this project's theoretical underpinnings and practical application.

B. Participants

Over the three-year project period, approximately 180 staff, parents, and administrators participated in the REALIGN inservice training process. All of the participants were active members of collaborative learning teams. Specifics about membership on collaborative learning teams can be found in Appendix A.

1. Site Selection

REALIGN participants were drawn from five public elementary schools in Fairfax County, Virginia. FCPS began the site selection process by targeting several potential REALIGN schools. The project staff contacted the principals of these schools to determine their interest in the REALIGN staff development approach. In schools where the principal was interested, the project staff conducted an on-site orientation for the school faculty. The project's target population was early childhood staff and parents during Year I and II. In Year III the target population expanded to include preschool through six grade staff. At each school, the staff, as a whole, decided whether or not to participate. In four of the five schools, all targeted staff members were expected to be active participants once the group committed to be a part of Project REALIGN. The demographic information for each participating school can be found in Exhibit II.3.

Exhibit II.3: Demographic Information REALIGN Participants: 1995-1998

Position	School A 1995-7	School B 1995-7	School C 1995-7	School D 1997-8	School E 1997-8	Course 1997-8
Preschool Special Education Teacher	6	7	8	4	0	0
Preschool Special Education Instructional Assistant	6	7	8	3	0	0
Head Start/FECEP Teacher	0	1	1	0	0	1
Kindergarten Teacher	0	1	1	1	2	2
General Education Instructional Assistant	0	1	1	1	1	0
General Education Teacher	0	3	5	7	18	5
Special Education Teacher	0	2	2	2	8	3
Special Education Instructional Assistant	0	1	1	3	3	1
Speech /Language Clinician	2	1	1	2	1	1
Reading Teacher	0	1	1	0	1	0
Administrator	2	2	2	0	2	0
Resource Teacher for Special Needs	0	1	3	0	0	0
Home Resource Teachers	0	1	3	0	0	0
Other Specialists	1	1	2	2	6	1
Parent	2	4	5	3	0	0
Total = 183	19	35	45	28	42	14

The number of participants increased each year, thereby expanding the impact of the project on children with and without disabilities. Exhibit II.4 demonstrates the incremental growth of the target population (e.g., staff and parents) and the concomitant growth in numbers of children with and without disabilities impacted by REALIGN.

Exhibit II.4: Incremental Growth of Target Population and Impact on Children

	Year I: 1995-6			Year II: 1996-7			Year III: 1997-8*		
School	# staff	# child w/dis.	# child w/o dis.	# staff	# child w/dis.	# child w/o dis.	# staff	# child w/dis.	# child w/o dis.
School A	19	75	0	19	75	8			
School B	15	40	14	24	70	125			
School C	26	70	14	25	95	150			
School D							28	75	175
School E							42	85	515
Totals	60	185	28	68	240	283	70	160	690

Key: w/dis=with disabilities; w/o dis=without disabilities

* The participants in the professional development course were not included in this exhibit.

C. Activities

REALIGN inservice training activities fell into three broad categories: (1) orientation activities; (2) model development and planning activities; (3) training activities. A greater percentage of time was spent in the first year with orientation, model development and planning activities. The REALIGN training began in January of the first year. During the second year, as the training expanded to include more grade levels, planning and orientation continued to consume a large percentage of time and the training hours increased significantly. In Year III the majority of the project hours were spent preparing for training and conducting training events. Evaluation activities became much more predominant in the third year of the project. Exhibits II.5-7 delineate project activities by year.

Exhibit II.5: REALIGN Inservice Training Activities for 1995-96

	Aug.'95	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.'96	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July
Orientation	• Orientation meeting with GWU/FCPS leadership in June and September. • Orient principals in 3 targeted schools • Orient staff in three targeted schools and attain a commitment to REALIGN. • Recruit and orient potential parent participants											
Planning & Model Developmt	• Develop FCPS/GWU Steering Team (CHAMPERS) • Establish monthly CHAMPERS meetings • Hold CHAMPERS retreat • Establish site selection process • Recruit and gather Inclusion and Training Advisory Teams • Research and develop inservice model • Plan two-day Community Building and Visioning Retreat					• Monthly CHAMPERS meetings • Two day retreat with Evaluation Consultant • Continue to meet with members of Inclusion and Training Advisory Teams • Meet with principals at 3 REALIGN schools to plan Year II activities						NECTAS program evaluation meeting Refine training
Training				• REALIGN staff visit selected sites ½ day/wk. • Staff at sites visit exemplary early childhood programs.		Two-day Community Building and Visioning Retreat for staff at the 3 selected schools.	Monthly REALIGN collaborative learning team (CLT) meetings at sites (2-3 hours). School A: 3 CLTs (KM) School B: 4 CLTs (SL) School C: 4 CLTs (CV)					Summer reading for CLTs

Exhibit II.6: REALIGN Inservice Training Activities for 1996-97

	Aug.'96	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.'97	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July
Orientation			• Orient new K-1 in existing schools to REALIGN. • Recruit parent participants for Yr. 2.		• Develop Yr. 1 summary • Hold GWU/FCPS Administrative Update Meeting				• Orient principals from Year III schools. • Orient K-6 staff at one of the Year 3 schools. • Orient FCPS Curriculum Specialists for 3-6th grades to the REALIGN process.			
Planning & Model Developmt	• Review and revise Year I REALIGN training. • Feedback from Inclusion and Training Advisory Teams • Create Evaluation Team and finalize evaluation plan.			• Plan and implement learning celebration. • Review and revise 2-day Community Building and Visioning Retreat for old and new staff at the 3 REALIGN schools. • CHAMPERS expanded to include primary-level representation and met bimonthly.			• FCPS administration identifies potential Year III schools. • Revise REALIGN process to include K-6 staff.		• Plan alternative Community Building and Visioning Retreat format for Year 3 schools. • Form Product Development Team and begin drafting REALIGN manual. • Reflect on progress of CLT from Feb-May. • Course development team transformed REALGN training into a yearlong 3-credit course.		
Training		• Continue monthly REALIGN collaborative learning team (CLT) meetings at the three sites (2-3 hours). • Hold Learning Celebration • Distribute recertification points to participants			• 2-day Community Building and Visioning Retreat for staff at 2 of the REALIGN schools.		• Monthly REALIGN collaborative learning team (CLT) meetings at sites (2-3 hours). School B: 5 CLTs School C: 4 CLTs • Workshops for preschool special education staff held at School A • Retrospective interviews piloted at School A.			Summer reading and meeting opportunities offered.		

Exhibit II.7: REALIGN Inservice Training Activities for 1997-98

	Aug.'97	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.'98	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July
Orientation	• Contact potential course participants and orient to course. • Orient parents in School D to REALIGN process.											
Planning & Model Developmt	• Finalized community building and visioning agenda for Schools D and E and course participants.		• Monthly planning meetings with team leading the training at School D. • Monthly co-planning meetings with resource teacher to share responsibility for training. • Monthly planning meeting with course instructors. • Monthly evaluation team meetings • Ongoing product development team meetings									
Training FCPS Academy Course			Weekend Community building and visioning retreat.	• Monthly 4 hour classes with 2-hour follow-up, site-based CLT meetings. • Learning celebration at end of course. • Conduct focused group evaluation of experience.								Analysis of evaluation data
Training School B and C		• Monthly REALIGN collaborative learning team (CLT) meetings at sites (2-3 hours). School B: 5 CLTs School C: 4 CLTs		• Hold Learning Celebration • Distribute recertification points • Conduct retrospective interviews.			• Support staff-initiated follow-up work to projects including resource materials, conferences, consultants, and visits to exemplary sites.				• Analysis of evaluation data	
Training Schools D and E	• Hold Community Building and Visioning training sessions for K-6 staff.		• Monthly REALIGN collaborative learning team (CLT) meetings at sites (2-3 hours). School D: 5 CLTs (FV) School E: 7 CLTs (HF)						• Hold Learning Celebration at each school. • Conduct retrospective interviews.			Analysis of evaluation data

Another way to consider the activities of Project REALIGN is to examine the collaborative learning teams and their project work. REALIGN participants in the five REALIGN elementary schools and the FCPS academy course created thirty-three projects. While most projects were completed in one year, a few teams chose to extend their project a second year in order to study the topic more deeply. Each of these projects was shared with the larger school staff and many of the recommendations were institutionalized at the school level. Exhibit II.8 delineates the names of the projects created each year at each school. Further description of the project work can be found in Appendix A.

Exhibit II.8: Collaborative Learning Project by School by Year

	Year I	Year II	Year III
School A	Public-Private Preschool Collaboration Community Integration Model Child-Initiated Thematic Approach Promoting Independence	Community Integration Model Child-Initiated Thematic Approach	
School B	Preschool-Community Alliance Enriching the Math Curriculum Enhancing Wonder in Classroom	Transitioning from Preschool Professional Development Center Community Integration Model Preschool-Community Alliance Portfolio Use in Reading	
School C	Transitioning from Preschool Linking Preschool Programs Peer Interaction Multi-age Grouping	School-Community Communication Peer Interaction Technology in the Classroom Primary Reading Assessment	
School D			Meeting Needs of All Children Parent Involvement Communication/Language Technology
School E			Children with Challenging Behavior Computer Skills School-based TV Primary Writing Assessment School-wide Behavior Plan Reader's Theater WEB Page for School Team Teaching Pottery for All
Course			Sharing the IEP with General Ed. Transition Planning Primary Writing Assessment

D. Methodological Adjustments

1. Model

Over the three-year model development process, REALIGN experienced several model shifts. In the original proposal, the inservice training competencies focused on team development and inclusive practices. Over time, REALIGN shifted its focus to developing school-based professional learning communities that explored new ways to meet the needs of children with and without disabilities in their schools. This shift to a school-wide staff development model promoted collaboration among professionals in the school. Building a collaborative, inclusive culture among professionals was the first step in building collaborative, inclusive programs for children.

A second model shift was working to build learning communities rather than multidisciplinary teams. At first REALIGN staff sought to build early childhood professional learning communities (preschool through first grade staff) and eventually elementary school professional learning communities (preschool through sixth grade staff). School principals were interested in developing continuity across the grade levels and felt that working as a multi-grade unit would provide new collaborative opportunities for their staff. Similarly, families were included as part of the learning community rather than as a separate group.

2. Target Population

Over the three years the REALIGN staff refined the recruitment strategies. The following guidelines helped to secure a commitment from participants to work on school-based learning teams.

- Participation was voluntary.
- Recertification points were awarded for staff development activities.

- The entire school was committed to ideas of site-based professional learning.
- The principal adjusted schedules to allow learning teamwork during contract hours.
- The vision of the school was well articulated.

a. Year I Adjustments

In the original application, four teachers and four assistant teachers, plus related services providers, an administrator and parents from four different schools were targeted as recipients of the training each year. Year I participants were to be drawn from preschool programs, Year II from kindergarten and Year III from first grade (pp. 16 & 18 of application). During the first year, the FCPS/GWU steering team believed that the training would be more effective if all preschool staff, rather than a limited number, participated in the training. It was felt that training all preschool personnel would enhance collaboration among multiple disciplines and have a greater impact on the school culture.

Including all preschool personnel from four schools would have increased the number of Year I participants to over one hundred with about sixty individuals needing substitute funds to participate. The project budget included substitute funds for sixteen teachers and sixteen assistant teachers. Concomitantly, the participants did not want to have three consecutive days of training where all of the staff were absent from preschool classrooms at the same time. Two decisions were made at that time. One was to train at only three demonstration sites the first year. This brought the number of participants to eighty-one, of which twenty-four teachers and twenty-two assistant teachers needed substitute funds. Our second adjustment was a change in the training schedule. Participants and FCPS officials allowed REALIGN to use teacher workdays and already scheduled inservice days to hold some of the training events. This arrangement provided a two-day kick-off retreat on January 29 and 30 (a workday and an inservice day) with subsequent training sessions on

Monday afternoons, which were currently early release days designated for staff development and professional work.

b. Year II Adjustments

In Year II, the target population expanded to include K-1 general and special education staff at two sites rather than the anticipated expansion to only the kindergarten staff at all three sites. In the two participating sites, staff from preschool through first grade, including general and special educators, instructional assistants, administrators and specialists were expected to participate. The preschool instructional assistants were the one exception to this expectation. The instructional assistants who had participated in REALIGN during Year I could choose whether or not to participate again in Year II. The Keene Mill principal requested that participation in REALIGN remain at the preschool level due to the scope of the technical assistance needed to forward their Year I project, "Community Integration Program", and to the multitude of other initiatives occurring in the primary grades at this school. Year II training commenced in January with a two day retreat and ended the following November with school-based learning celebrations.

c. Year III Adjustments

For Year III, the FCPS administration requested that the REALIGN training be offered to a new site with a preschool to second grade general and special education staff as the target population. Staff at Fairfax Villa Elementary School agreed to participate. Participation at Fairfax Villa was voluntary. After several orientation sessions approximately 30 staff members and 4 parents, including representatives from general and/or special education staff at most grade levels, decided to participate.

Hayfield Elementary School in FCPS requested to be involved in Project REALIGN training. Hayfield was in the first year of an inclusion initiative and felt that the REALIGN process

would be beneficial in building the capacity and vision of the staff. Forty-two teachers, specialists, instructional assistants and administrators participated in the yearlong process.

In addition, the REALIGN training was offered as a FCPS Academy Level Course for school teams. Teams composed of general and special education staff from three elementary school participated in this Academy Level Course entitled, "Staff as Collaborative Learners: Creating Quality Programs for Children with Diverse Needs" (see syllabus in Appendix A). The course was a yearlong experience held after school once a month. Ninety recertification points were given to course participants.

In the third year Stratford Landing and Clearview Elementary Schools received ongoing support services, as determined by the sites. At Stratford Landing facilitators for a collaborative learning team received support in organizing a Reggio Amelia study group, although the group did not begin their study sessions during the year. At Clearview staff used substitute money to go on site visits and hold two workshops with area consultants on autism and emotional intelligence.

3. Training Cost Categories

In the Year II and Year III planning for REALIGN training it was possible to schedule many of the REALIGN training workshops during currently designated inservice times, thus reducing the need to have much of the training cost funds in a "substitute funds" category. Given the focus of REALIGN on developing learning teams, which both need to study and build programs together, modifications were requested to the categories of approved spending in the training costs section of Year II and Year III budgets. The total dollars allocated to this category remained the same. The options for dispersing funds were modified to offer more diverse professional training activities. New categories for training costs funds included:

- Substitute funds to release REALIGN trainees and trainer candidates to attend training activities.
- Funds to support the attendance of REALIGN trainees and trainer candidates at local professional activities that support REALIGN goals and objectives.
- Child care reimbursement funds for parents attending the REALIGN training.
- Funds to compensate REALIGN trainees for attending REALIGN training activities after normal work hours.
- Funds to support fifteen facilitator candidates in summer work-study programs.

4. Parent Brochure

As REALIGN evolved, it became clear that the development of a generic parent brochure on inclusion was outside the scope of this project. Each REALIGN pilot school chose to address parent involvement in different ways. Collaborative learning teams from every REALIGN school identified a need to inform and include parents as a primary focus of their project (see description in this section (II), Part D. Given the initiative taken by each school to find unique, meaningful ways to involve the families in their school and community, REALIGN staff felt that efforts were best spent supporting the work of each project team rather than creating a REALIGN parent brochure.

5. Training Manual

As the product development phase of REALIGN neared, it became increasingly clear that there was no one correct way to conduct the REALIGN training. REALIGN is a process-oriented model that does not have a prescribed set of materials through which participants' progress. Rather there is a flow of processes through which the trainers and facilitators must lead groups in order to create the intended results. To that end, the idea of a trainee's manual and a trainer's manual was

collapsed into a comprehensive REALIGN guidebook that includes the theory, methods and tools that are essential for designing and leading the REALIGN training process.

E. Evaluation Findings

1. Research Design

a. Overview

Project REALIGN sought to enhance the capacity of participants to:

- build knowledge and skills in areas that are personally meaningful and fulfilling;
- collaboratively create strategies that were responsive to the diverse needs of students; and
- include young children with disabilities as active members of their school community.

Evaluation findings focus on the ability of the REALIGN collaborative learning process to accomplish these proposed outcomes.

The REALIGN evaluation model is a phenomenological inquiry into the experience of collaborative learning from the unique perspectives of participants. In the phenomenological approach the meaning of an experience is gleaned from those individuals who have had the experience and are able to describe it (Creswell, 1998). It is a research methodology in which "perception is regarded as the primary source of knowledge, the source that cannot be doubted" (Moustakas 1994, p. 52). Moustakas goes on to say, "the knowledge sought is arrived at through descriptions that make possible an understanding of the meanings and essences of experience" (p. 84). Through in-depth retrospective interviews, focus groups and final evaluations, Project REALIGN participants described their perceptions of the phenomena of collaborative learning.

b. Research Sample

Project REALIGN was conducted in a suburban public school district adjacent to a large metropolitan city. Approximately 180 individuals composed of multidisciplinary elementary school faculty and parents participated in Project REALIGN during the three-year grant period. Participants were drawn from five elementary schools and a professional development course sponsored by the school district. The participating staff represented a number of educational programs, including general education, Head Start, English as a Second Language, and a variety of preschool and elementary special education models. Participants also represented various disciplines (e.g. general and special education), roles (e.g. teachers, assistant teachers, parents, administrators and specialists), and grade levels (e.g. preschool through sixth grade).

A purposive sampling of twenty-nine trainees participated in the REALIGN retrospective interviews. A demographic chart of this sample appears in Exhibit II.9.

Exhibit II.9: Sample for Retrospective Interviews

School	A	B	C	D	E	Totals
Principal	1	1	1	1	0	4
Teacher General Education	0	1	0	2	1	4
Teacher Special Education	1	3	2	1	2	9
Instructional Assistant	1	1	0	1	1	4
Parent	1	1	1	1	0	4
Specialist	0	1	1	1	1	4
Totals	4	8	5	7	5	29

In addition, all teaching staff taking the professional development course and a self-selected group from School C participated in focus group discussions.

c. Research Methodology

Qualitative information describing the impact of the collaborative learning process was drawn from three primary sources: (1) retrospective interviews; (2) focus groups; and (3) final evaluation questionnaire. The retrospective interview was a semi-structured interview process consisting of eight open-ended questions. The interview format can be found in Appendix C. Interviews were conducted by an evaluation consultant and the REALIGN training specialist at the five participating schools at the conclusion of the REALIGN training sequence. The interviews were conducted before school, after school, or during a school break, based on interviewee availability, and took from one hour to one and one-half hours to complete. All of the interviews were tape recorded and transcribed.

Focus group data was gathered at two events: (1) the professional development course final class; and (2) a one year post-REALIGN follow-up meeting at School C. The focus group with course participants centered on the impact of the collaborative learning process on the teams and their schools. The follow-up focus group at School C inquired into the sustained impact of the REALIGN process on the school. Focus group questions can be found in Appendix C. The focus groups were tape recorded and transcribed.

During the final REALIGN training activity at each school and in the course, all participants were encouraged to complete a final evaluation. One part of the evaluation consisted of four open-ended reflective questions focusing on the experience of collaborative learning. The final evaluation questionnaire can be found in Appendix C.

All of the qualitative data was coded and categorized by a team of reviewers. The use of multiple researchers added to the verification of the analysis by offering multiple perspectives of the data. The QSR Nud.ist (4) software, was utilized to enter coded data in categories based on the proposed project outcomes and on new, unanticipated themes which emerged throughout the analysis process. The triangulation of these three sources of data added depth to the analysis process.

The evaluation findings address the following research questions.

1. What is the impact of the collaborative learning process on participants as individuals?
2. What is the impact of the collaborative learning process on participants as members of the school community?
3. What impact did the collaborative learning process have on instructional practices?
4. What impact did the collaborative learning process have on opportunities for children with and without disabilities and their families to share elementary education experiences?
5. What are the factors that enhance or inhibit collaborative learning?

2. Findings

Research Question 1: What is the impact of the collaborative learning process on participants as individuals?

Two major themes emerged regarding the impact of the collaborative learning process on the participants as individuals: (1) increased professional knowledge; and (2) increased personal confidence. These two themes were often intertwined in the participants' comments. The interwoven nature of two themes is illustrated by this comment from a teacher in the course, "working as a group will always enlarge your thinking, enrich your being, and excite your mind."

Increased professional knowledge

Many REALIGN participants stated that the collaborative learning experience resulted in an increase in their professional knowledge. The collaborative learning process provided multiple opportunities and resources for parents, administrators, teachers, assistant teachers and specialists to acquire new knowledge. Many participants visited exemplary programs both in and outside of their school district. Others attended professional workshops and conferences related to their topic of study. Many REALIGN participants reported that the monthly collegial discussion with staff from different grade levels and different disciplines enhanced their learning. A teacher from School E illustrated this thought.

> "I learned so much from the lower grades, just what they experienced, and I appreciate what they do, have to do, down there in kindergarten and first grade. And they learned from us, also. I think it opened up my mind to different things."

Participants reported that these collaborative learning opportunities led to an expanded awareness of theories and strategies, as well as, growth in specific content areas. They were more aware of techniques used by colleagues in their school. A teacher from School E describes how collegial sharing impacted the knowledge and skills for her group.

> "We had a group of seven coming together, teachers that were co-teaching already, and not. It taught my co-teacher and I a lot about the different styles of co-teaching, and it made us actually focus on that aspect of our relationship. We learned a lot."

Many group participants reported an increased commitment to life long learning. The experience sparked one individuals' desire to pursue a higher academic degree. One assistant teacher from School C commented, "the benefit of learning from knowledgeable individuals [and] of sharing good ideas is the desire to learn more."

Increased personal confidence

An increase in personal confidence was one of the most profound impacts of the collaborative learning process and by far the most predominant comment from instructional assistants and parents. For many of these individuals, Project REALIGN was an opportunity to learn and to communicate as equals with teachers, therapists, and administrators. Parents expressed a surge in confidence, both in their capacity to participate in professional collaborative learning experiences, and in their ability to advocate for all children. Instructional assistants often reported a feeling of empowerment through their equal participation on collaborative learning teams. One instructional assistant from School A shared this thought, "I took away from this experience that I could be more of a leader in my own way and that my opinion matters--it's important and it counts--and that I have good ideas too."

The ability of instructional assistants and parents to state their opinions and share their knowledge with the entire group grew throughout the life of the collaborative team. An instructional assistant from School E spoke very positively of her team's collegiality, "we created a team where we all heard each other, respected each other, and became one unit".

A new teacher expressed the same feelings of increased confidence that many of the instructional assistants described. Initially this teacher was uncomfortable joining a group. With support from her collaborative teammates, she became more comfortable with her own ability to contribute to the group and be an active member of her school community. A principal reflects on the impact of this growth in personal confidence among her staff members, "It taught me, very personally, to be open minded. Through Project Realign I saw that anyone can become a leader if it's allowed to happen."

Research Question 2: What is the impact of the collaborative learning process on participants as members of the school community?

Three themes emerged regarding the impact of REALIGN on participants as members of the school community: (1) enhanced relationships within the school community; (2) increased capacity for collective thinking; and (3) enhanced ability to work collaboratively.

Enhanced relationships within the school community

New and enhanced relationships among parents, administrators, and staff from multiple disciplines and grade levels were highlighted as significant results of the collaborative learning experience. Relationships based on shared interests developed as participants self-organized into learning teams to explore personally relevant topics. One of the school principals indicated that the collaborative learning process provided the opportunity for individuals to become better acquainted in a shorter period of time around topics of professional growth and importance. Another principal felt that the collaborative teams contributed to staff coming together on behalf of all children.

Many teachers and parents indicated that the collaborative learning experience enhanced the sense of community in the school. A teacher from School E described this feeling.

> "The whole staff are all communicating now. Usually you have the fifth grade sit together, the kindergarten, the first grade--everybody is so segregated. But now you see everybody talking and sharing."

Some felt that the school was more connected due to a heightened awareness of what was going on in other classrooms. When discussing a specific curriculum that her group was investigating, a teacher from School E commented,

> "Just today I walked through second grade and saw them using the R*eaders Theater*. The first grade used that as the focus for their parent program. It's very nice to see that something we studied is being used by various grade levels."

A new appreciation of roles and responsibilities emerged as general educators, special educators, and other school specialists took the time to better understand each other. One team member discusses the potential power of this new connectedness, "much can be accomplished if you approach it with a team attitude like we did—we're all in this together and we all want it to happen. If there is a will there is a way." Teachers expect these new relationships across grade levels and disciplines to continue providing expanded opportunities for sharing expertise and resources among school staff.

Increased collaboration between school staff and parents was a significant result of the collaborative learning process. One parent from School D noted how collaborative learning changed the manner in which teachers and parents related to each other.

> "It helped bring about some good relationships and bridge-building between parents and the school staff. It let them view each other in a different way, as opposed to parent-teacher to more as a partner in educational improvement."

Increased capacity for collective thinking

Creating new knowledge through exploration, experimentation, reflecting, and sharing with individuals representing diverse perspectives was viewed as a benefit of Project REALIGN. The collaborative learning process encouraged teams to combine their thoughts to create something bigger than a collection of individual ideas. Participants valued collective thinking. Working as a team was seen as better than working alone. Teams reported enhanced results when their membership included different grade levels. A teacher from School B noted, "including staff from different grade levels on a collaborative team encouraged staff to investigate deeply the programs that their children transition from and will transition to." Another interviewee reflected on the team learning process.

> "Supportive teammates shared wonderful ideas, volunteered to do different jobs, everyone assumed roles and all decisions were by consensus. The ideas generated by creative minds inspired creativity in others."

The untapped expertise of parents and instructional assistants became apparent to the entire team. Many staff stressed the merit of learning with parents. One teacher from School D believed that, "the parent perspective really makes a difference." Parents also commented on the power of collective thinking, as expressed by a parent from School D, "I think the significant results are that we all got smarter".

Enhanced ability to work collaboratively

Some participants reported learning new strategies or techniques for effective group functioning. Team meeting strategies were identified by a number of staff as being helpful. The principal from School C felt that the use of charts and summary techniques by facilitators had a positive effect on all group members in that it validated the work of the group.

Some interviewees expressed a heightened awareness of effective communication skills. Several noted the impact of communication style on group productivity and satisfaction. Two teachers commented on the importance of using effective communication strategies.

> "The most important thing to me was learning to listen and really hear what others were saying and asking for clarification if needed, not just assuming what I hear is correct."

> "I think that in learning how to work together as a team, there were many things that we as individuals had to overcome - not lose our own identities, but to focus not just on our own opinions. We learned to listen, reflect and share."

Research Questions III and IV focus on changes in educational practice and programs. The findings report on the responsiveness of instructional practices to meet the diverse needs of children and on opportunities for children with and without disabilities and their families to share elementary education experiences. Participants often noted a positive correlation between more

responsive practices and expanded inclusion opportunities for children with disabilities. The findings reported for Research Questions III and IV relate directly to the outcomes of the collaborative learning projects. Exhibit II.10 offers a summary of collaborative learning projects by school. A detailed display of the projects, their team members, and notable results can be found in Appendix A.

Exhibit II.10: Project REALIGN Collaborative Learning Projects

SCHOOL "A"	· Collaboration Between Community Preschool Program and School "C" · Community Integration Preschool Program · Using the Thematic Approach Based on Children's Interests · Strategies to Promote Independence
SCHOOL "B"	· Preschool – Community Alliance · Preparing Preschool Children for Transition through Enriching the Math Curriculum · Enhancing Wonder through our Classroom Environment · Transition Team · Professional Development Resource Center Team · The Community Integration Team · Portfolio/Life Long Readers Team
SCHOOL "C"	· Establishing Collaboration for Preschool-Kindergarten Transition · Preschool Center-Based and Home Resource Programs Linking with the Community · Facilitating Peer Interaction during Activity Time · Exploring the use of Multi-age Grouping to Meet Diverse Needs in Preschool Community. · Keep In Touch With You · Peer Interaction · The Technology Team · Clarity of Expectations
SCHOOL "D"	· Meeting the Needs of all Children · Parent Involvement · The Communication Team · The Technology Team
SCHOOL "E"	· School-Wide Behavior Plan · Reader's Theater · WEB Page Design · Team Teaching Strategies · Pottery · Strategies for Children With Challenging Behavior
Professional Development Course	· Transition Planning Team · Increased Collaboration Between General Education and Special Education · The PRI Project (Primary Reading Inventory)

Research Question 3: What impact did the collaborative learning process have on instructional practices?

Two themes related to changes in instructional practices emerged from the data: (1) different approaches for working with children; and (2) tools and strategies for meeting the diverse abilities and needs of students.

Different approaches for working with children

Some of the collaborative learning teams focused on different approaches for working with children. Five teachers and one speech and language clinician from School E investigated team teaching approaches. One teacher on this team described how the team discovered what worked best for them and the children in their classrooms.

> "When we went into this whole project at the beginning of the year, we thought co-teaching was one person teaching, one person roaming. We started off that way but then by looking and investigating all the different types of co-teaching, we learned that there are different ways. We got to try out different ways. It made the classroom better, because now we all use different types and not just this one type of co-teaching, which benefits the kids. Some kids benefit from both of us teaching, and some from one or the other."

This same team experimented with different approaches for integrating the speech language clinician in the classroom.

> "We looked at having our speech teacher come in [the classroom]. What can she do in the classroom, as far as co-teaching with us? She comes in now and she helps with spelling and writing and social studies. Before she would come in and just roam around and help the kids as needed or we would do 'pull-out'. Now she's actually in the classroom and she's working and we learned to integrate her into the process.

Participants from several multidisciplinary collaborative learning teams reported on their team's investigation into different approaches for working with children. An instructional assistant from School A discussed her team's goal of increasing the independent functioning of children with disabilities. They created a "Strategies for Independence" booklet and presented it to their staff. An instructional assistant from School B felt that her team's exploration into creating "wonder" in the classroom led to changes in the classroom environment and to a greater emphasis on child-centered rather than teacher-directed instruction. A team at School D explored the topic of enhancing communication for children with disabilities and with limited English proficiency. A participating parent commented on how new approaches to communication helped her at home with her daughter, "for me, there was personal growth with communicating with my daughter. [I gained] specific skills. It gave me hope for improved communication".

Some collaborative teams investigated approaches that would have a school-wide impact on students. A group from School D designed a plan to support children experiencing learning difficulties in the general education classrooms. The staff believed that a school-wide resource "lab" staffed with faculty members and assisted by parent volunteers might be one way to provide the needed supports. By the end of the project cycle, the team and the principal were jointly looking for funds to hire the needed staff.

A collaborative group from School E hoped to initiate a school-wide discipline program. The group investigated current behavioral expectations of school staff and exchanged ideas among different grade levels regarding group behavior management strategies. School-wide discipline programs in other schools were presented and discussed with the entire school faculty. This exchange of ideas raised awareness and consistency of behavior management strategies across grade levels.

Tools and strategies for meeting the diverse abilities and needs of students

Through collaborative learning projects, REALIGN participants created new tools and strategies in the areas of curriculum, assessment, transition, and family involvement. Including children without disabilities in preschool special education programs encouraged teams at two schools to investigate ways their curriculum could better address the strengths, needs and interests of children from a wide range of developmental abilities. A team from School A experimented with child-initiated themes as a new curriculum strategy, while a team at School B worked at creating a math-rich environment for an integrated preschool classroom. Another team, while investigating "responsive" reading strategies, discovered the potential of *Readers Theater* to meet the needs of diverse readers in a general education classroom setting.

Two teams focused on strategies to increase assessment continuity and consistency across grade levels when using the Primary Reading Inventory (PRI). One group identified and "leveled" books to be used for assessing primary reading levels, while the other group developed a writing sample booklet that could be used to evaluate writing samples at the kindergarten through second grade levels.

Including staff from different grade levels on collaborative teams led three groups to investigate transition issues. A team at School C studied best practices for transition and developed some new strategies for the transition of preschool children with different abilities. A team of five teachers participating in the professional development course enrolled their entire faculty in a school-wide transition plan for students with disabilities. To their credit, the plan was officially incorporated into their school improvement plan. Finally, a team from School B utilized technology as a tool to ease the transition of children from kindergarten through first grade. One teacher from the team commented that the group "found their common interest in

technology as they began to see ways to connect the learning of the youngest kids through the eight year olds."

Exploring strategies to increase parent involvement was an interest of several teams. A team from School D developed and distributed a questionnaire to staff and parents in an effort to understand various perspectives concerning parent involvement. One teacher commented on feedback for the questionnaire.

> "So I was thinking, do they look at my newsletters? So it was interesting. For some people, I thought they liked it, so when they checked off newsletters [on the questionnaire], I was like, oh, they must like getting it. That was interesting feedback from the community."

Another team at School C worked with the principal to make their school more welcoming to the community be reorganizing the office and front lobby. They also designed a school information brochure for new parents.

Research Question 4: What impact did the collaborative learning process have on opportunities for children with and without disabilities and their families to share in elementary education experiences?

Two themes emerged related to increased opportunities for children with and without disabilities to share educational experiences: (1) increased opportunities for children with and without disabilities to share elementary education experiences; and (2) enhanced family involvement and family support programs.

Increased opportunities for children with and without disabilities to share in elementary education experiences

Collaborative learning teams studying community integration models, peer interaction strategies, and team-teaching discovered strategies and tools that supported more inclusive

interactions in the classroom. Developing a community integration model at the preschool level was a project focus at Schools A and B. In both instances, the model development process was arduous requiring approval from school and district administration and the school parents, followed by an extensive recruiting process. At the beginning of the second year, the principal from School A proudly announced, "we now have a few community children in our preschool and the difference in those classrooms is phenomenal."

Preschool staff from School C, where integrated programs were already in place, decided to explore strategies that promote interaction between children with and without disabilities during free choice time. This investigation lasted two years with the team developing a database of social goals, observation techniques, and environmental modifications that facilitate peer interaction. As a culminating activity they held a coffee where they shared their knowledge with their school community and early childhood educators from neighboring preschools.

A team at School E decided that a school-wide TV morning show would help build school spirit and a sense of community. One goal of the show was to include children with disabilities as reporters. A special education teacher, who personally pursued ways to increase opportunities for students with disabilities to be members of the news team, speaks of her success.

> "Right now, their [students with disabilities] self-esteem is like so high and they walk around the school holding their heads high. People notice them and recognize them. They're just beaming. Teachers come up to them and congratulate them for the job that they did."

Enhanced family involvement and family support programs

Four out of the five schools explored family involvement and/or family support programs. Some looked at ways to enhance family involvement within their schools, while

others branched out to support families in their larger community. All of these collaborative groups discussed the need for families of children with disabilities, without disabilities and from different ethnic groups to view themselves as members of their school community.

A collaborative team from School D wanted to encourage fuller participation of parents in their school. Through research and a parent-staff family involvement survey, they discovered the limitations of their current program and explored ways to redefine and expand their parent involvement opportunities.

A team from School C, comprised of teachers from home resource and preschool center based programs, a speech and language therapist and a parent, investigated ways to improve linkages between the preschool home resource program and the preschool center-based program. Through combined parenting workshops for home resource and center based families, the families of children receiving home resource services began to feel part of the school community.

The Preschool-Community Alliance collaborative team looked for strategies to commingle families of children with and without disabilities in their parent involvement activities. As are result of input from their parent survey, two "make and take" parent workshops were held for families of preschool children with and without disabilities.

A collaborative team from School E believed a parent resource center would provide support for parents of children with and without disabilities. As a result of their work, they have been granted an on-site parent resource center. One teacher enthusiastically described the project.

> So we'll have our work cut out for us in the fall, setting this [resource center] up. We're going to have a center here in the school where our parents come.

Research Question V: What are the factors that enhance or inhibit collaborative learning?

The experience of collaborative learning varied greatly for each individual and each school. Each individual brought a unique perspective and set of expectations to the collaborative group. Each school brought its own culture, style and expectations. Participants identified six factors that enhanced or inhibited their participation in the REALIGN collaborative learning process. The factors were time, choice, school-wide focus, resources, sharing results, and leadership.

Time

Limited amount of time was reported most frequently as an inhibitor to collaborative learning. The time away from the classroom for site visits, the time to meet as a team, and time for school-related responsibilities are examples of time issues mentioned primarily by classroom teachers. They often felt frustrated when making decisions about how to best utilize their limited amount of time. A teacher from School D discussed the impact of time on her collaborative learning experience.

> "I like working with other people, but it certainly seemed hard for me to get my schedule together with everybody else's. Sometimes I needed my Monday afternoons for planning, which is my primary purpose there, to teach the children. I felt like I was letting my group down when I couldn't be there, but I certainly have to choose the priorities and sometimes I interfered with everybody else's. That's the hard part about working with a group--getting everyone's schedules together.

Time was often described as a double-edged sword. Some said it was difficult to find the time to meet, yet they wanted more time to discuss what they were learning. One team tried to meet every week even though time was only set aside once a month for collaborative meetings.

Some of the participants had difficulty rationalizing the initial time spent in forming their collaborative learning team and designing a study plan. They described the initial stages in the

process as confusing and frustrating. However, with hindsight, their opinions often changed. One teacher from School E commented on this.

> "I find any time that I'm not using my time in a way that I feel productive, whether it's productive or not, there are times that's your perception. Later you look back on it and find out that it was more productive than you thought it was. But, at the time, it was a bit frustrating."

Many participants said that the collaborative learning process took more time than they expected. Two of the schools participated in the project for two years. A teacher shared her conflicting feelings about allocating time for REALIGN.

> "I appreciate the opportunity to work and learn with Project REALIGN. I find it difficult to allow time for this project and meeting my professional and contractual demands. However this year, I am a lot more focused and excited about participating in REALIGN."

Some staff appreciated the fact that time had been set aside for collaborative learning. The time allotted for the collaborative meetings gave staff permission to spend time together. A teacher from School E comments, "it was really nice after a school day go in, everybody sit down and see how things are going, discuss things, have role-plays. It's a large school and especially for new teachers, sometimes you don't speak to any other teachers." A participant in the professional development course reiterates the benefits of taking time to collaborate.

> "Having the time to work together - a group of people with ownership of a project; the journey of four individuals coming together and finding something to work on as a team and becoming one."

Choice

Issues around choice were construed in three different ways. Participants first concern was whether or not they had the choice to participate in REALIGN. Those who felt participation was required were often angry. Because they felt forced to participate, their commitment to the time intensive and difficult practice of collaborative learning was tenuous.

Sometimes participants had to choose between the REALIGN collaborative team meetings and other school or district sponsored inservice programs. Sometimes the principal or central office administration made the choice for them. A teacher relates the difficulty of making a choice, "I wouldn't eliminate other in-services. They said we didn't have to go to all the district in-services that were available but I think that we still need to go to those." Other teachers appreciated that they could choose which inservice events to attend.

Participants reported that having the authority to choose the team's topic of study enhanced the REALIGN experience. Staff and parents expressed appreciation for the ability to choose a topic that was professionally interesting, personally relevant, and aligned with school goals.

School-wide focus

Two factors that enhanced the impact of the collaborative learning process in a school were: (1) a well-articulated school vision; and (2) a high percentage of participating school staff. In schools were a strong commitment to a vision was absent, it was difficult for some staff to choose topics for group study. They expressed a desire for more guidance in selecting their topic of study.

In one school, the entire staff joined collaborative learning teams in an effort to move the school closer to its vision. For this school, the amount of knowledge generated by the learning teams enabled the school as a whole to make extraordinary strides toward its vision. A teacher comments on this.

> "It involved so many different groups that each group could go out and research it and not be a burden on the whole staff, because there was so many of us. It allowed us to expand more--to gather more information."

Having a school-wide impact was difficult for those schools where only part of the staff participated. In the first two years of REALIGN, the participants were drawn from preschool through first grade programs. For these schools, the benefits were specific to the early childhood programs. Some participants felt it could have been more beneficial if the entire school participated in REALIGN.

Resources

The monetary resources that supported the REALIGN training process allowed participants to engage in some unique and meaningful learning experiences. Funds were available to parents for child care costs enabling many to attend the monthly two-hour collaborative team meeting. The principal from School D commented on this resource.

> "Certain financial support that would enable us to involve parents in a way that we had never been able to before, because there were opportunities for child care without the faculty having to do that. So it offered an opportunity to open some doors and involve some people that we've tried to involve over time but didn't have the resources."

Funds for substitutes provided staff with opportunities to visit other schools and attend conferences and workshops. Two teachers from School D expressed this thought.

> "My favorite part was when I got to go to B Elementary to observe another school and their process."

> "I was able to go with two other colleagues to visit a school that had already implemented a program where it was all inclusive. What they did was use their special educator to team-teach in different classrooms. That was a great experience for us."

Some collaborative groups used funds to hire consultants to observe in their classrooms and consult with staff on specific topics of study. Material resources such as journal articles, books and Internet sites were also reported as helpful. One teacher from School B said, "I feel more knowledgeable having visited sites and done reading, listening, etc."

Team facilitators, a human resource, were described by most of the participants as a positive. A teacher from School D said, "It was nice to have somebody that was in the position as a facilitator." School E did not have a designated facilitator for each collaborative team. Some felt a facilitator might have enhanced their ability to communicate and further the group's work.

Sharing results

The opportunity for collaborative learning teams to share their findings with colleagues was described as meaningful whether or not the whole school had participated in REALIGN. A teacher from School B said, "my satisfaction has dramatically improved since this sharing of ideas and exchanges between the group at large." The principal from School D also believed the sharing of results was helpful to participating members.

> I think the opportunity to share the success of the projects with each other in the [learning] celebration was a significant opportunity to do a number of things—[such as] give them closure and bring everyone up to date on where things were going."

School E, felt that their school-wide learning celebration helped to solidify knowledge and spread the newly developed expertise throughout the school. One teacher said,

> "We presented our information to the whole group. I think it not only opened it to us, but we got to branch out. We got to show the other people different types of co-teaching and what we learned and everybody knew who was on what team. I had a third grade teacher come to me and say, 'what co-teaching style did you guys try? What really worked for you?' Then she went and tried it, so it crossed over. I think it was real helpful."

Leadership

Leadership was intricately connected with each of the other factors. The leader's behavior, style, and decisions emerged as an essential ingredient to the viability of the REALIGN site-based professional development model. The most positive responses to Project REALIGN came from schools where administrators took active roles on collaborative project

teams. These administrators continually supported the project through verbal support and by providing time for REALIGN meetings. One teacher felt that the principal's attendance at team meetings increased the likelihood that the administration would be supportive of the team's project. Some staff felt that the principal's willingness to let staff make their own decisions about participation, topic of study, and attendance at meetings enhanced their collaborative learning experience. The principal from School C encouraged ownership through choice.

> "Make the commitment to the time that you need and let some other things drop--that's o.k., because you are developing something very worthwhile that the staff as a team said are important issues to us.'"

The leadership style varied in each of the participating schools. Some leaders encouraged staff to make their own decisions about participation; others did not. Some were active team members; others served as a resource to the groups. Time and again data indicated that the leader's ability to support the development of a culture where collaborative learning was able to flourish proved essential to the success of the REALIGN professional development model.

3. Summary

This section has outlined the findings of the REALIGN evaluation component. Specifically it has reported the impact of the REALIGN collaborative learning process on the participants as individuals and as members of a school community. It also looked at changes in educational programs for children with and without disabilities and their families. Finally, it discussed factors that enhanced or inhibited collaborative learning among staff and parents in a school.

Completion of the analysis process increased our understanding of the phenomenon of collaborative learning from the perspective of a diverse group of elementary school staff and parents. When adequate resources and supports were provided, participants overall reported

positive impacts on their personal growth, their school community, and their children and families.

III. REALIGN Facilitation Development Program

A. Model

Project REALIGN is a professional development model designed to expand the capacity of elementary school staff, administrators, and families to collaboratively create strategies which meet the diverse needs of students with and without disabilities in their school. Project REALIGN represents a break from the traditional training approach to staff development that focuses on the transfer of knowledge from the trainer to the learner. Instead, REALIGN focuses on increasing the capability of the staff and families in a school to form a strong learning community committed to improving practices for all children. The emphasis in REALIGN is on creating a school climate that encourages professional inquiry, reflection, creative thinking and experimentation. Teacher leaders who are able to facilitate learning among peers are key to establishing and maintaining vital professional learning communities in schools. The facilitator designs processes that assist participants in working collectively to identify and accomplish their goals.

Because skilled facilitators are key to the success of this site-based, staff-centered professional development model, REALIGN designed a Facilitation Development Program. This program prepared teachers to take leadership roles in the REALIGN professional development process. This section describes the conceptual underpinnings of this facilitator preparation program.

1. Facilitation: A Definition

Facilitation is the art of guiding people through processes which: (1) support movement toward a mutually agreed-upon goal and (2) encourage the full participation and valuing of all individuals involved.

The facilitator moves a group of individuals toward a group-generated goal in a way that maximizes the contribution of each individual. Throughout the facilitation process, the facilitator has one eye on the task-at-hand and the other on the interpersonal dynamics of the group. This dual orientation offers salve for the task-oriented group who become so engrossed in getting the job done that they ignore the feelings of their colleagues, as well as, for the group who are so concerned about how people feel that they never get the job done. The balance between trust and task orientations is fundamental to the success of any group facilitation effort.

2. Relationship-Orientation

Facilitation encourages full participation and valuing of all individuals involved. The facilitation process must not only help a group accomplish a task, but also work together in a compatible manner. This relationship-oriented aspect of the facilitation process requires the infusion of strategies which build trust, support honest communication, encourage multiple perspective taking and value the diversity of styles, skills, and knowledge that exist within a group.

Group work thrives when there is a high level of group trust. Carl Rogers (1967) identified three key interpersonal ingredients essential to effective helping relationships: (1) realness; (2) unconditional positive regard; (3) empathic understanding. Though a helping relationship, in Rogerian terms, is not the ultimate goal of a facilitator, it is certainly paramount that a significant

amount of trust and support is present within the group. For that reason, these three elements will be briefly explored.

Rogers felt any person involved in helping relationships must be real. Real people reflect honesty--congruence between words and actions and a genuineness that says "you can trust me--count on me". Unconditional positive regard is an acceptance, caring for, and valuing of others for who they are. When unconditional positive regard, another key attribute, is present, people become more comfortable discussing their negative as well as positive feelings, their uncertainties, and their gaps in knowledge and experiences. Empathic understanding, Rogers final attribute, has long been described as the ability to walk in someone else's shoes--to sense accurately the feelings and thoughts of another person and communicate this understanding. Empathy is an essential ingredient in the process of active listening and inquiry; two skills that facilitators rely on as they work to create shared meaning and understanding in a group. The ability of facilitators to listen and inquire with empathic understanding helps participants feel safe to discuss issues from different and perhaps controversial perspectives. Facilitators who live and model the qualities of realness, unconditional positive regard, and empathic understanding will provide a strong foundation of trust and will be on the road to creating a climate for a well-functioning group.

3. Task-Orientation

In REALIGN, the group's goal or task is not about doing more of the same but rather about creating something that improves the quality of education for children. The intent of REALIGN is to produce positive changes for children. Whenever the current situation or modus operandi is placed in juxtaposition to new ideas or a vision of the future, tension is created. To illustrate, imagine a person standing between two posts one marked "current situation," and the other marked "vision of the future". He has two rubber bands around his waist. One rubber band is

attached to the current situation post and one is attached to the vision of the future post. As our person works on his task to create a new future, he moves gradually toward the vision of the future post. The farther away from the current situation post he moves, the more tension he feels from the rubber band attached to that post pulling him back to old ways. At the same moment he feels less tension from the rubber band that is attached to his vision of the future post. This illustrates the natural tension between the predictable, knowable, past-orientation and the uncertain, risky future-orientation. Just because we have gotten half way to our goal, we cannot assume the rest is smooth sailing. The tension to return to the old ways is always there, even after we've reached the new post. The facilitator can anticipate the need to address the group's tensions regarding change.

The facilitator must also help the group manage the more basic elements of how to collaborate around a specific task or project. Is there a leader? What other roles do group members need to play in the meeting for it to be successful? How are we to make decisions--majority, consensus, unanimous vote? What is our goal? What steps should we take to get to our goals? What are the needed roles and responsibilities and how are they distributed among the group? What is the timeline? How is progress monitored and personal accountability encouraged? The facilitator supports the group in making group management and strategic planning decisions.

4. Facilitation: A Balancing of Tensions

In REALIGN the facilitator helps to build a bridge between what is currently happening and what might be possible in the future. Inherent in helping a group consider change and innovation is the need to manage participants tensions regarding the change process. Some people hold tight to the past, some thrive on change, some believe in the need for change but seem stuck in the constraints of the present. The facilitator can sense group tension and helps group members

convert reticence or fear into sources of energy. Exhibit III.1 illustrates the varied sources of tension which emanate from differing orientations to work, relationships, the past and the future.

Exhibit III.1: Facilitation: A Balancing of Tensions

Task/Work Orientation
making decisions and commitments
•charting responsibility
•forming action plans
•creating time

Past/Historical Orientation
•interviews
historical maps
•update each other
inventories
•case studies

Future Orientation
•asking what success would look like
•guided imagery to stand in future
•daring self to dream
•talking with visionary leaders

Relationship Orientation
•team building activities
•using process models and maps
•stepping outside the process
•checking feelings
•becoming aware of different styles

Source: The Grove Consultants International (1994) *An Orientation to Facilitation--Fundamental Principles.*

Finding the right balance between task-trust orientations and between past-future orientations is a major role of the facilitator. The ability to analyze the impact of each of these orientations or tensions helps the facilitator make decisions about when, where, and how the process will flow. For example, if the facilitator perceives a participant is blocking the group's progress with comments like "we've already tried that," or "this feels like more of the same", it may be a clue to have that person share their historical perspective and what they have gleaned from the past. After having the historical concerns aired, there may be more room to move forward. In any group situation, the facilitator can anticipate that some members will cling to the past, while others are

ready to charge into the future. Some members will be very cautious about upsetting the interpersonal dynamics while others are seemingly blind to people's feelings as they plow on with the task at hand. The facilitator must have skills to observe, analyze and act on the group's needs.

5. The Flow of the Facilitation Process

The Drexler/Sibbet Model (The Grove Consultants International, 1994) provides a model for understanding the flow of the facilitation process. The Drexler/Sibbet Team Performance Model is based on the premise that there is a predictable pattern or stages in a group's change efforts. One of the basic patterns is a movement between obstacles and opportunities--constraints and possibilities. The process will most likely look like a "hike over peaks and valleys" or a roller coaster ride with ups and downs. Some will be personal ups and downs based on where each individual begins the process. At other times the whole group will experience elation at a new idea or the confines of the reality of their situation. The Drexler/Sibbet Model (Exhibit III.2) delineates a seven-stage process that vacillates between vision at the top and reality at the bottom.

Exhibit III.2: The Drexler/Sibbett Model of Stages of Group Performance

Top Line Vision

1. Orientation — 7. Renewal

2. Trust Building — 6. High Performance

3. Goal/Role Clarification — 5. Implementation

4. Commitment

Bottom-line Realities

Source: The Grove Consultants International (1994) *An Orientation to Facilitation--Fundamental Principles.*

Several assumptions undergird this seven-stage process:

- There are ups and downs in the facilitation process--ups are when possibilities are open and downs are when things feel constrained and options are limited.
- Creative tension is a natural outcome of the juxtaposition of vision and reality.
- Visioning is a freeing act whereas committing is grounded in the constraints of reality.
- Certain questions need to be answered at each stage to provide the base to move on.
- The facilitator leads the group into the commitment and follows as the group moves into high performance.
- Stages often need revisiting to renegotiate or reestablish decisions previously made.

The stages of group performance described here are applicable to groups of any size. In Project REALIGN these stages are applicable both to the work of the school-wide learning community and the smaller collaborative learning teams. Each stage, though part of the larger process, has unique questions, outcomes and pitfalls. Exhibit III.3 has been designed to help the facilitator anticipate and plan for some of the major issues and accomplishments associated with each stage of group performance.

B. Participants

1. Facilitator Candidate Selection

Facilitator candidates were selected from a pool of FCPS teaching staff. In Year I preschool staff members who had been involved in the FCPS Integrated Preschool Project were invited to apply for the Facilitator Development Program. In Year II, staff at the kindergarten and first grade

Exhibit III. 3: Major Issues and Accomplishments Associated with Each Stage of Group Performance

Orientation Question: Why am I here? -will this work be meaningful -will I be accepted -do I have something to offer	**Trust Building** Question: Who? -who are you -what do you expect of me -are you committed to the task	**Goal Clarification** Question: What are we doing? -what's the problem?	**Commitment** Question: How will we do it? -who will do what? -what resources do we have?	**Implementation** Questions: Who does what, when, where?	**High Performance** Questions: WOW	**Renewal** Questions: Why continue?
Outcomes -purpose -personal fit -membership	Outcome -mutual regard -forthrightness -spontaneous interaction	Outcome -clear problem statement -explicit assumptions -clear goals	Outcome -shared vision -allocated resources -identified roles -organization decisions	Outcome -clear process -alignment -disciplined execution -track progress	Outcomes: -flexibility -intuitive communication -synergy	Outcomes -recognition -change mastery -staying power -celebration
Defensive Behaviors -fear -uncertainty	Defensive behavior -mistrust -caution -facade	Defensive Behavior -apathy -skepticism -irrelevant competition	Defensive Behavior Dependence Resistance	Defensive behaviors -conflict -nonalignment -missed deadlines	Defensive behaviors -overload -disharmony	Defensive behavior -burnout -boredom

Source: The Grove Consultants International (1994) *An Orientation to Facilitation--Fundamental Principles*

levels in FCPS who had been involved in inclusive education activities were invited to apply as were staff members who were involved in Project REALIGN during Year I.

Applicants were asked to complete the application form and submit a principal recommendation. Project staff made appointments to visit applicants at their schools, observe them in the classrooms and talk with them about the commitment of this program. After the visits, the REALIGN GWU/FCPS steering team interviewed each applicant and selected the candidates.

2. Facilitator Candidates

A facilitator cohort was selected in Year I and Year. In Year III intensive support was given to the Year I and II facilitators. Below are names, positions, and schools of the facilitator candidates.

Facilitator Cohort I: 1995-1998

Name	Position	Elementary School
Karen Bump	Preschool Special Education	Belvedere
Jean Waylonis	Head Start	Belvedere
Maura Burke	Preschool Special Education	Belvedere
Ramona Wright	Preschool Special Education	Clearview
Laura Bell	Head Start	Clearview
Donna Schatz	Preschool Special Education	Forestdale
Amy King	Preschool Special Education	Greenbriar East

Facilitator Cohort II: 1996-1998

Name	Position	Elementary School
Thea Cox	Preschool-1 Multiage	Hunters Woods
Carol Flicker	First grade	Hutchinson
Wendy Boehm	LD	Hayfield
Liz Bush	First grade	Hayfield
Jennifer Rose	1-2 Multiage	Westbriar
Laura Freeman	Primary LD	Westbriar
Marty Brosky	Preschool Special Education	Stratford Landing
Pam Pavuk	Preschool Special Education	Stratford Landing

3. Facilitator's Responsibilities

The facilitators had many different opportunities to practice their facilitation skills over the three-year project cycle. The first year of training consisted of observation and study for all facilitators. During their second year of training, the facilitators worked with a collaborative learning team in one of the REALIGN schools. Several veteran facilitators took more advanced instructional roles the third year of REALIGN. Exhibit III.4 displays the roles of the facilitator candidates over the three-year project.

Exhibit III.4: Roles of Facilitator Candidates by Year

Name	1995-6	1996-7	1997-8
Maret Wahab	Realign staff	facilitator	facilitator
Holly Blum	facilitator	facilitator	lead trainer
Sheryl Fahey	observer	facilitator	facilitator
Renna Jordan	observer	facilitator	--
Karen Bump	observer	facilitator	course instructor
Jean Waylonis	observer	facilitator	--
Maura Burke	observer	facilitator	facilitator
Ramona Wright	observer	facilitator	course instructor
Laura Bell	observer	facilitator	school coordinator
Donna Schatz	observer	facilitator	--
Amy King	observer	facilitator	course instructor
Carol Flicker	--	observer	facilitator
Wendy Boehm	--	observer	lead trainer
Liz Bush	--	observer	facilitator
Jennifer Rose	--	observer	facilitator
Laura Freeman	--	observer	facilitator
Marty Brosky	--	observer	school coordinator
Pam Pavuk	--	observer	school coordinator

C. Activities

The goal of the REALIGN Facilitator Development Program was to prepare selected staff, administrators and/or parents to take leadership roles in the REALIGN staff development process. The work of the facilitator was to lead activities/processes that assist participants in working

collectively to identify and accomplish their goals. The facilitator assumed the role of a process guide rather than a content expert.

1. REALIGN Facilitator Competencies

The following are the competencies that grounded the activities of the Facilitator Development Program. These competencies were developed and refined by the facilitator candidates at the end of Year I and Year II.

I. Personal Commitment to Life Long Learning

II. Knowledge about Adult Learners
- -knowledge of learning styles
- -identify stages of adult learning/knowing
- -strategies for accessing group members' experiences, needs and expectations

III. Knowledge of the REALIGN Conceptual Framework and Technical Process
- -understand the constructivistic model of adult learning and staff development
- -understand the REALIGN change model
- -strategies for community building
- -strategies for shared visioning
- -strategies for collaborative learning

IV. Mastery of the Facilitation Process
- -understand the facilitation sequence
- -recognize and negotiate different expectations
- -strategies which support group learning and movement toward a goal

V. Effective Group Communication Skills
- -active listening, e.g. listen, summarize, clarify, reflect
- -negotiate shared understanding/meaning
- -support a balance of inquiry and advocacy
- -support multiple perspective taking
- -recognize and use ladder of inference
- -support all voices being heard

VI. Management of Group Processes
- -create balance between group's trust-task orientations and past-future orientations
- -establish group norms
- -manage group stress and conflict
- -read and respond to group defensive routines (fight/flight, polarization)
- -help group examine their behavior

2. Facilitation Development Curriculum

The Facilitation Development Program consisted, at a minimum, of monthly facilitator seminars, monthly work with a REALIGN collaborative learning team and two work-study retreats. This schedule varied year by year and group by group.

Goals of the Facilitation Development Program

A. Develop understanding of the future-focused change process
B. Apply knowledge about adult learning to the facilitation process
C. Understand team development process and elements that support positive team development.
D. Support a learning group through the stages of the collaborative learning process
E. Identify group dynamics and design effective group interventions
F. Facilitate effective communication among group members

Topics of Study and Primary Resources

1. **Learning Communities: Theory and Practice**

Fullan, M.G. 1995. "The School as a Learning Organization: Distant Dreams." *Theory into Practice* 34(4), 230-235.

O'Neil, J. 1995. "On Schools as Learning Organizations: A Conversation with Peter Senge." *Educational Leadership* 52(7), 20-23.

Senge, P., A. Kleiner, C. Roberts, R. Ross, and B. Smith. 1994. *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook: Strategies and Tools for Building a Learning Organization*. New York: Doubleday.

Wheatley, M.J., and M.Kellner-Rogers.1996. *A Simpler Way*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publisher, Inc.

2. **The Process of Change and School Reform**

Caine, R.N., and G.Caine. 1997. *Education on the Edge of Possibility*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

Darling-Hammond, L. 1996. "The Quiet Revolution: Rethinking Teacher Development" *Educational Leadership* 53(6), 4-10.

Fullan, M.G. 1993. "Why Teachers Must Become Change Agents." *Educational Leadership* 50(6), 12-17.

3. Visioning Process

Weisbord, M.R., and S. Janoff. 1995. *Future Search*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publisher, Inc.

Collins, J. and J. Porras. 1996. "Building Your Company's Vision." *Harvard Business Review*. (March), 65-77.

4. Collaborative Learning Process

Ryan, S. 1995. "The Emergence of Learning Communities in *Reflections on Creating Learning Organizations*. Edited by K.T.Wardman. Cambridge, MA: Pegasus Communications, Inc.

5. Team Development and Group Dynamics

Friend, M., and L. Cooke. 1996. *Interactions*. White Plains, NY: Longman Publishers.

Johnson, D.W., and F.P. Johnson. 1994. *Joining Together: Group Theory and Group Skills*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Pugach, M.C., and L.G. Johnson. 1995. *Collaborative Practitioners: Collaborative Schools*. Denver: Love Publishing Co.

Schwarz, R. M. 1994. *The Skilled Facilitator*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Sweeney, L.B., and D. Meadows. 1995. *The Systems Thinking Playbook*. Framingham, MA: Turning Point Foundation.

The Grove Consultants International. 1995. *Team Start Up: Creating Gameplans for Success*. San Francisco: Author.

6. Process Observation

Powell, P.J. 1993. "Using a Process Observer to Improve Group Success." *Journal of Staff Development. 14(2), 36-39.*

7. Facilitation Process

Schwarz, R.M. 1994. *The Skilled Facilitator*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

The Grove Consultants International. 1994. *An Orientation to Facilitation—Fundamental Principles*. San Francisco: Author.

8. Communication and Dialogue

Isaacs,W. 1993. "Dialogue: The Power of Collective Thinking." *The Systems Thinker*. 4(3), 1-4.

Senge, P., A. Kleiner, C Roberts, R. Ross, and B. Smith. 1994. *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook: Strategies and Tools for Building a Learning Organization*. New York: Doubleday.

Bohm, D. 1990. *On Dialogue*. Ojai, CA: David Bohm Seminars.

Every facilitator received a copy of *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook: Strategies and Tools for Building a Learning Organization* to use as a text for the Facilitation Development Program.

3. Facilitator Development Timeline by Activity

The Facilitator Development Program was a three-year process that provided the candidates with multiple exposures to processes and skills of facilitation with increasing small group facilitation responsibilities. The facilitator development activities are listed below. They are further outlined year by year in Exhibits III.5-7.

Year I

I. Observe/assist at REALIGN events

II. Participate in monthly facilitation seminars

>Pre-Seminar Reading

>2-3 hour Seminar

>Homework

III. Develop personal learning plan to guide Year II learning

IV. Contribute to the refinement of the Facilitation Development Program

>Summer work-study retreat

>Winter work-study retreat

Year II

I. Participate as a member of a Facilitation Team

II. Further study in the Vision-based Change Process

III. Contribute to the refinement of the REALIGN Training and Facilitator Development Program

>Winter work-study retreat

>Summer work-study retreat

>Product development opportunities

>Project dissemination opportunities

Year III and after

I. Be an active member of REALIGN facilitator team.

>Monthly Facilitation Team Meeting

>Summer Work-Study Retreat

Exhibit III.5: Facilitator Development Activities 1995-1996

Months	Aug	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July
Cohort I Study	Application development Selection of facilitator candidates				Sem.	Retreat 1 day	Sem.	Sem.	Sem.	Sem.	Retreat 3 days	
Cohort I Practice						Retreat Obs.	Obs.	Obs.	Obs.	Obs.		

Exhibit III.6: Facilitator Development Activities 1996-1997

Months	Aug	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July
Cohort I Study	Sem.	Sem.	Sem.	Sem.		Retreat 1 day	Sem.	Sem.	Sem.	Sem.	Retreat 2 days	Product Dev.
Cohort I Practice	Fac.	Fac.	Fac.	Fac.		Fac.	Fac.	Fac.	Fac.	Fac.		
Cohort II Study	Selection of facilitator candidates				Sem.	Sem.	Sem.	Sem.	Sem.	Sem.	Retreat 2 days	
Cohort II Practice					Obs.	Retreat Obs.	Obs.	Obs.	Obs.	Obs.		

Exhibit III.7: Facilitator Development Activities 1997-1998

Months	Aug	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July
Cohort I and II Facilitators: Study	Retreat 1 day	Sem.	Sem.	Sem.	Sem.	Sem.	Sem.	Sem.	Sem.	Sem.	Retreat 2 day	
Cohort I and II Facilitators: Practice	Retreat 1 day	Fac.	Fac.	Fac.	Fac.	Fac.	Fac.	Fac.	Fac.	Fac.		
Cohort I Course Instructors: Plan	Plan 1 week	Plan	Plan	Plan	Plan	Plan	Plan	Plan	Plan	Plan	Retreat 2 day	
Cohort I Course Instructors: Teach			Retreat Teach 2 days	Teach		Teach	Teach	Teach	Teach	Teach		
Cohort II Course Facilitators: Study		Sem.	Sem.	Sem.	Sem.	Sem.	Call	Call	Call	Call		
Cohort II Course Facilitators: Practice				Fac.	Fac.	Fac.	Fac.	Fac.	Fac.	Fac.		
Cohort I and II Lead Trainer: Plan	Plan 3 days	Plan 2 days	Plan	Plan	Plan	Plan	Plan	Plan	Plan	Plan	Retreat 2 days	
Cohort I and II Lead Trainer: Practice		Retreat Lead	Lead	Lead	Lead	Lead	Lead	Lead	Lead	Lead		

D. Methodological Adjustments

1. Shift from Trainer Development to Facilitator Development

Since the focus of the REALIGN inservice training model was empowering staff to take charge of their learning experience, skilled facilitators, not trainers, were key supports for the collaborative learning teams at the participating schools. The original Trainer Development Program required adjustment of the title and the competencies to match the revised REALIGN approach. The facilitator candidates drafted a set of facilitator competencies at the first work-study retreat. These competencies were then reviewed and revised by the REALIGN training advisory team and the GWU/FCPS steering team. The revised facilitator competencies can be found in this section (III) Part C. Activities.

2. Facilitator Selection Process

The selection of facilitator candidates in Year II deviated slightly from the proposed model. Because our target population had changed from a preschool-K population to a preschool-1 population, the steering team felt it was important to have facilitator candidates with expertise in the K-1 curriculum and inclusion activities at the K-1 levels. The search for candidates was extended to exemplary general and special education teachers in FCPS at the K-1 level. Staff from the REALIGN schools were also given the opportunity to apply to the Facilitator Development Program. Eight facilitator candidates were selected for the Year II cohort.

By Year II there were fifteen facilitator candidates, exceeding the target number of twelve by three people. Rather than add more trainees in Year III, it was decided to provide intensive support to the development of the facilitator candidates in Cohorts I and II. In Year III, candidates took different roles as facilitators that required varied and individualized coaching sessions with the

REALIGN staff. Over the three years, many facilitators became so accomplished that they have expanded their leadership roles in their schools and at inservice training events.

3. Modified Evaluation of Facilitation Development Process

The scope of the facilitator evaluation process was limited to the Stages of Concerns open-ended statements and an analysis of the personal learning goals of the facilitators. Problems with evaluating this component were a result of the low number of facilitator candidates, poor response to written evaluation questionnaires, and the inability to conduct meaningful pre- and post-observations of facilitator candidates.

E. Evaluation

The facilitation development component addressed two research questions: (1) how did the concerns of the facilitator candidates change over time; and (2) how did the personal learning goals of the facilitator candidates change over time? Data was gathered annually at the summer facilitator's retreat through open-ended questionnaires completed by the facilitator candidates. Fourteen of the fifteen facilitator candidates participated in some aspect of the evaluation process. Exhibit III.8 offers demographic information about the participating facilitator candidates.

Exhibit III. 8: Demographics of Facilitator Candidates

Job Title	# of participants	Range of years teaching	Average # of years teaching
Preschool special education teacher	6	3-16	8.2
Head Start teacher	2	11-15	13.0
Primary teacher (K, 1, 2)	4	6-24	15.3
Primary special education teacher	2	12-23	17.5

Research Question 1: How did the concerns of the facilitator candidates change over time?

The candidates' concerns about facilitating the work of the collaborative learning teams were measured with the Open-ended Statements of Concern about the Innovation (SoC) (see Appendix C). The SoC is part of the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) developed by Hall, Wallace and Dossett at the Research and Development Center for Teacher Education at the University of Texas in Austin. The CBAM is based on the assumption that change is a personal experience and that individuals involved in change go through identifiable states in their feeling about adopting an innovation as well as their skill in implementing it. The SoC dimension focuses on the concerns of individuals involved in the change process. Research has identified seven states of concerns that the users of an innovation experience. According to the CBAM SoC, a person is at one of the first stages of concern, e.g. awareness, informational or personal when first introduced to an innovation. As implementation gets underway, management concerns become more intense. Later in the change process the last three states of concern, e.g. consequence, collaboration, and refocusing predominate. Concerns appear to be developmental in nature moving from self or personal concerns to task concerns and finally to impact concerns. Exhibit III.9 illustrates this progression.

Exhibit III.9: Stages of Concern about the Innovation

0	Awareness: Little concern about or involvement with the innovation is indicated.
1	Informational: A general awareness of the innovation and interest in learning more detail is indicated. The person seems to be unworried about her/himself in relation to the innovation.
2	Personal: Individual is uncertain about the demands of the innovation, his/her inadequacy to meet those demands, and his/her role with the innovation.
3	Management: Attention is focused on the processes and tasks of using the innovation and issues relating to efficiency, organizing, managing, scheduling, and time demands.
4	Consequence: Attention focuses on impact of innovation on learners in his/her immediate sphere of influence. The focus is on the relevance of innovation to the students, evaluation of student outcomes, including performance and competencies, and changes needed to increase student outcomes.
5	Collaboration: The focus is on coordination and cooperation with others regarding use of the innovation.
6	Refocusing: The focus is on exploration of more universal benefits from the innovation, including the possibility of major changes or replacement with a more powerful alternative. Individual has definite ideas about alternatives to the proposed or existing form of the innovation.

Original concept form Hall, G.E., Wallace, R.C. , Jr. and Dossett, W.A. A developmental conceptualization of the adoption process within educational institutions. Austin: Research and Development Center for Teacher Education, The University of Texas, 1973.

The following edited excerpt from Hord and colleagues (1987) explains further the developmental nature of the Stages of Concern model.

> When a change effort is in its early stages, teachers are likely to have *self-concerns* (stages 0,1,2). They will want to know more about the innovation, when it will begin, and the kind of preparation they will receive. Personal concerns will also be intense during this time. Teachers may be concerned about their ability to execute a new program or about making mistakes. *Task concerns* (stage 3) typically become more intense as final preparations are made for beginning use of an innovation and during the early period of use. Time management, preparation, and organization are all common concerns of this period. *Impact concerns* (stages 4, 5, 6) are most intense when concerns are centered around the effects of an innovation on students and what can be done to improve the effectiveness of the program. It is most probable that concerns will develop in a wave pattern. That is, self-concerns will be most intense in the early change process

and abate with time, and task or management concerns will rise. Only after management concerns have been reduced do impact concerns tend to intensify.

In Project REALIGN, the open-ended statement of concern questionnaire was completed twice, each time by only a portion of the facilitator candidates. Candidates were asked to list three things that presently concern them with regards to being a REALIGN facilitator. Statements were categorized by stage of concern and number of years in the facilitator development program. Exhibit III.10 displays the percentage of concerns that fell in Stages 0-2—Self-concerns, Stage 3—Management Concerns and Stages 4-6—Impact Concerns by years of experience in the Facilitator Development Program.

Exhibit III.10: Percentage of Concerns by Stage and Amount of Training

Stages of Concern	After 1 year of training N=8	After 2 years of training N=10	After 3 years of training N=4
Self concerns	**59%**	33%	0%
Management concerns	27%	**45%**	33%
Impact concerns	14%	22%	**67%**

The highest percentage of concerns moved from Year I self-concerns to Year II management concerns to Year III impact concerns. This pattern follows the developmental pattern described by Hord and colleagues (1987) as a typical for individuals involved in adopting an innovation.

Predominant "concern" themes were identified based on the number of years the facilitators had participated in the training. Exhibit III.11 displays the primary concerns expressed each year in each stage. Of interest was an increased expression of personal concerns

by several of the facilitators at the end of two years of training. These facilitators had agreed to be REALIGN course instructors, responsible for the delivery of the entire REALIGN process. This marked a significant increase in responsibility from facilitating a collaborative learning group in a REALIGN school. These concerns were allayed in year three after they had successfully completed teaching the course.

Exhibit III.11: Percentage of Concerns by Stage and Amount of Training

Stages of Concern	After 1 year of training N=8	After 2 years of training N=10	After 3 years of training N=4
Self concerns	>Roles and responsibilities >Benefits to candidate >Explaining to others >Personal inadequacies >Time commitment	>Time commitment >Skills and knowledge of REALIGN process >Self confidence	
Management concerns	>Group communication >Group conflict >Facilitation process >Establishing shared goals	>Maintain facilitator's role >Time management >Organization and execution of processes >Manage group dynamics >Juggle roles of facilitator	>Fine tune processes and strategies
Impact concerns	>Team building and group cohesion	>Value to participants >Co-constructing with group >Expanding knowledge of REALIGN model	>Develop strong sense of group identity >Shared collegiality >Refining REALIGN model

Research Question 2: How did the personal learning goals of the facilitator candidates change over time?

The investigation of this question is especially helpful to staff developers as they work to design curriculum that supports the emergence of teacher-facilitators. Data was gathered from the facilitators' personal learning plans (see Appendix C) the summer following the first and second year of training. Questions on this survey included: (1) my strengths as a facilitator are; (2) I would like to be more competent as a facilitator in the following areas; and (3) my top priorities for growth next year are. Six facilitators, who were active participants in the Facilitator

Development Program for the first two years, contributed data. In analyzing the candidates stated learning priorities for each year, several trends or patterns emerged.

- Broad goal statements such as "learn more about the process and practice of facilitation" made in the first year by the majority of the candidates became more refined and specific in the second year. This suggests that the candidates had a much better understanding of the skills and competencies that comprise facilitation. Second year goals related to facilitation included:
  - Ability to process group events as they are happening
  - Ability to suspend assumptions
  - New ways to encourage reflection
  - Build trust within group
  - Start group off in relaxed mood
  - Know what to do if group stumbles
  - Be able to present information in several ways so everyone will understand
  - Reinforce, support, model ground rules
  - Encourage visioning and establish common ground/understanding
- After the second year of training more of the candidates desired a greater depth of understanding and more fluidity in the process and skills of facilitation. This indicated an increased level of competence in facilitating groups. Second year goals include:
  - Develop *further* understanding of group processes
  - Think *faster* when facilitating and summarizing
  - Have facilitation be *second hand* to me

- Handling conflict in groups was a popular topic for second year learning goals. Five of the six candidates made statements such as, "becoming a better facilitator in difficult situations", or "identifying how and when to intervene in group behaviors".
- Finally there was much validating after the second year regarding the impact of the Facilitation Development Program on the lives of the candidates. Candidates were asked to express how the training has effected them personally, as a team, and in their school. The following excerpts are illustrative of the candidates' feedback.

REALIGN facilitator development has opened many doors at the personal, team and school level. I am actively trying many of the ideas presented in "effective communication" and although I am not always using the skills/strategies, I am able to reflect on ways I could have communicated more effectively. Currently I am thinking about how I might use some skills/ideas present through Realign to encourage good communication—a good level of trust among our team at school (which will be going under significant changes in the fall). At the school level, I believe that my peer/colleagues have begun to view me in a different light.

At a personal level, I've become a better listener at home with my family. I will summarize and ask for clarification with less assuming and interfering. As a team, I have used some of the forms and strategies with my co-teacher and our preschool team. At school our staff meetings are now run according to REALIGN collaborative team meeting format. Our principal is no longer totally in control of staff meetings.

At the personal level I am more aware of how my actions impact group work. I attempt to suspend assumptions rather than becoming defensive or emotional. As a team member I am more aware of other team members communication and learning styles. Our team used the meeting form to help planning time. At school I have a better understanding of school initiatives and more aware of the dynamics and communication during staff meetings. Colleagues have approached me for input regarding the negotiation of situations. At the system level, I better understand the system and view change as systemic rather than just looking at change in my classroom. I am interested in the change models used by other organizations and attempt to understand how community leaders initiate change.

VI. Project Impact

A. Dissemination Activities

1. Presentations

From 1997-1998, the REALIGN project staff presented the collaborative learning model at numerous conferences or seminars at the local, state and national level. The following is a list of topics, conferences and dates of the presentations.

"Project REALIGN: An Innovative Staff Development Model." International Conference for the Division of Early Childhood, Phoenix, Arizona, October, 1996.

"Early Childhood Staff Working Together to Create Inclusive Classroom: A Learning Team Approach." 41st Annual VAECE Conference, Virginia Beach, VA, February 28, 1997.

"Early Childhood Staff Working Together to Create Inclusive Classroom: A Learning Team Approach." 8th Annual Resource and Collaborating Teaching Symposium, Williamsburg, VA, November 6, 1997.

"Collaborative Learning Approach for Professional Development." Leadership Academy Seminar, Fairfax County Public Schools, VA, November 7, 1997.

"Early Childhood Staff Working Together to Create Inclusive Classroom: A Learning Team Approach." 1997 Annual National Association for the Education of Young Children Conference, Anaheim, CA, November 14, 1997.

"The Collaborative Project Approach: Developing Professional Communities through Multidisciplinary Staff Development Opportunities." Council for Exceptional Children Annual Conference, Minneapolis, MN, April 17, 1998.

"Project REALIGN: Model for Staff Development and Training." Head Start 4th National Research Conference, Washington, D.C., July 10, 1998.

"Collaboration and Co-Teaching" Success by Eight Summer Institute, Fairfax County Public Schools, VA, August 26, 1998.

"Collaboration and Co-Teaching." Combined Services Model Training, Fairfax County Public Schools, VA, September 14, 1998.

One proposal was accepted but staff were unable to attend the conference.

"Building Professional Learning Communities: An Innovative Staff Development Approach" 1997 ACEI Annual International Studies Conference, Portland, OR April 9-12, 1997.

Several proposals were submitted to national conferences but not accepted.

"School-based Staff Development: A Collaborative Learning Approach." 1998 Annual Conference for the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, San Antonio, TX, March, 1998.

"Growing Professional Learning Communities in Our Schools." 1998 Annual Conference for the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, San Antonio, TX, March, 1998.

"Changing the Culture of Our Schools." Systems Thinking In Action Conference, San Francisco, CA, September, 1998.

2. Seminar Series

From November 1996 through May 1997, sixteen principals and assistant principals in Fairfax County Public Schools in Virginia participated in a leadership action research group. These school leaders utilized the REALIGN collaborative learning process as they worked in self-organized groups around school renewal topics.

B. Continuation Activities

Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) continues to encourage school-based staff to work together to learn new ways to meet the diverse needs of children in their school. While the focus of REALIGN was to support movement toward more collaborative, inclusive service delivery model, the REALIGN Collaborative Learning Process is applicable to many initiatives. In FCPS, the application of REALIGN's Collaborative Learning Process has emerged and will continue in several forms, including:

- Collaborative Learning Process is used by the FCPS Office of Early Childhood and Family Services for training the Family and Early Childhood Education/Head Start staff and the sixteen schools involved in their Success by Eight Initiative.

- The REALIGN framework is currently being used by several schools involved in the Coordinated Services Model (CSM), a combined general and special education elementary school initiative.
- Fifteen teachers or specialists in FCPS are trained as collaborative learning team facilitators. Several of these facilitators have initiated study groups in their schools. Others have been hired as consultants to facilitate small group work for school district staff development events.

C. Publications and Products

1. Documentation of Model

Realigning Our Schools: Building Professional Learning Communities is a comprehensive book covering the theory and practice of building professional learning communities. It is a documentation of the REALIGN model and will be marketed as a product. The complete book is included as an attachment to this final report.

2. Program Evaluation Instrument: Integration and Collaboration Questionnaire

The Questionnaire on Integration and Collaboration found in Appendix C was developed as a pre/post test instrument to examine the differences between perceived importance and actual performance in collaboration and integration. The questionnaire has three sections. Section I asks for demographic information. Section II asks respondents to rate six statements that depict attitudes about integration. Section III has two distinct scales: (1) collaborative practices; and (2) integration practices. Respondents are asked to rate the twenty-five questions from two perspectives: (1) their typical practice in relation to the statement and (2) the importance of the practice to them.

The full instrument was peer and expert reviewed for face validity. It was piloted in two schools during the second year of the project and revised based on feedback. During the third year of the project, the revised questionnaire was again piloted in two different schools. Participants were asked to complete the questionnaire at the beginning and the end of the nine-month REALIGN training cycle.

At the conclusion of the second pilot, alpha reliability was calculated on the three scales of the questionnaire: (1) attitudes about integration scale; (2) collaborative practices scale; and (3) the integration practices scale. Alpha reliability was .55 for the six-item, likert-scaled attitudes about integration scale. This moderate reliability was not surprising given that the measurement of reliability is partly a function of the number of items on the scale. Alpha reliability for the twelve-item, likert-scaled collaboration typical practice scale was .96, indicating a very high internal consistency. Alpha reliability for the thirteen-item, likert-scaled integration typical practice scale was .42, suggesting further refinement for this scale. The alpha reliability was artificially inflated for the scales that measured the importance of collaboration and integration (.96 for each) due to the vast majority of respondents who indicated that all collaborative and integration practices are important.

The collaborative practices scale may provide a useful indicator for future inquiries about professional collaboration practices. A discrepancy analysis between the respondents' typical practice and their perception of importance may provide important information for planning professional development efforts.

D. Implications of Project Findings

"There are changes due to our participation that may not have been put into place had we not participated in the program." (Teacher in School A)

The goal of Project REALIGN was to develop, implement and evaluate a staff development model that expanded the capacity of early childhood staff, administrators, and families to work together for the purpose of (1) enhancing the quality of education for all young children and (2) maximizing opportunities for young children with disabilities to be active members of the school community. REALIGN sought to support the emergence of vibrant professional learning communities in schools—communities where individual and organizational growth occurred simultaneously. The findings of this three-year professional development project suggest the realization of this goal. Knowing full well that the REALIGN collaborative learning approach is a work in process, the following are interim implications drawn from the project findings.

The REALIGN collaborative learning process provided multiple avenues for individual, group, and school community growth. Many participants believed that the opportunity to work with individuals representing different disciplines, grade levels and roles not only enhanced the work of the team but significantly increased the relationships within school community. Some staff indicated intent to continue with their projects and new relationships even though REALIGN has ended. The new relationships, especially across grade levels and disciplines, have created new opportunities for sharing expertise and resources among the staff. Both individual and group development are important results of the collaborative learning process.

Individuals grew in confidence and professional knowledge, while the development of new approaches and strategies benefited children across classrooms and grades.

Choosing a topic of personal importance that was connected to a school-wide goal was an important component of this model. Participants chose topics that were professionally relevant and personally interesting. Relationships were enhanced as groups formed around areas of shared interest. This combination of choice and relevance energized the teams to move forward in times of confusion. Connecting the topics of study to a school-wide improvement plan or vision enhanced the effectiveness of the process for participants and the school as a whole. It added an extra dimension of purpose, urgency, and accountability to the professional development process. The development of a school vision and focus for school improvement is a time intensive effort. REALIGN was most successful in schools that had clearly articulated visions that the staff supported. The two-day REALIGN Community-building and Visioning Retreat proved inadequate in creating staff alignment around a compelling school vision.

Having the resources to support the development of a school-based professional learning community was as a significant factor in all the schools. Resources included financial support for substitutes; workshops and conference registration, professional materials and child care assistance. Skilled facilitators were important sources of guidance for the collaborative learning teams. It was often suggested that this type of intense learning might not be as successful without the facilitator support. The allocation of internal resources was also critical such as time to meet, choices about participation in staff development and faculty events, access to human, financial, and material supports.

Knowledge of the pre-existing context for collaborative work is critical for staff development leaders and facilitators. Many staff had previously formed identities about the

nature of their teamwork. For some, a reputation had been established many years ago. Understanding the current perceptions a group holds about their level of collaboration is critical. When misjudged, frustrations and even resentment can emerge when presenting ideas for enhancing teaming and/or collaboration skills.

Moving to a collaborative learning approach to staff development requires guidance at the process and content levels. For the most part, staff development has been construed as an individual process. At an inservice event, teachers are exposed to new methods and materials and are expected to implement them in their classrooms. It is a fairly prescriptive, straightforward approach. The collaborative learning process is a 180-degree shift. Staff from various roles, disciplines, and grade levels are expected to form learning teams around meaningful topics and then design a collaborative learning project. In REALIGN some staff wanted specific guidelines for the development of their project, rather than letting the action plan emerge based on the interests of the group. They were often frustrated by the ambiguity of the planning stages, feeling they were spinning their wheels. In the end, the process of honing a topic and plan of study was clarified for some. For others, the open-endedness of the early stages of the collaborative learning process remained an obstacle to staff-initiated professional development.

The role of the leader in a site-based professional learning community approach remains ill defined. It has proven difficult to identify the specific role of the leader in advance. It is more closely connected with ways of being a leader, such as trustworthy, collaborative, delegating, than what a leader does. During REALIGN, most leaders were better supports and guides than permanent members on a collaborative learning team. Participants felt it was

important to clarify the role and expectations of the school leader before beginning the collaborative learning process

Alignment at the school district administration level is needed for site-based staff development to be successful. As schools take charge of their professional learning, school district staff developers need shift into a support and resource role. Staff are too frequently overwhelmed by initiatives that are generated at the central office level. Without alignment between the district and school around staff development priorities, teachers too often find themselves torn between two separate systems of staff development.

V. Future Activities

The final activity for Project REALIGN is seeking a publisher for *Realigning Our Schools: Building Professional Learning Communities.* Other spin-offs of REALIGN are still surfacing as the staff work to incorporate their learning into models for professional development schools and graduate level programs of study.

References

Creswell, J.W. 1998. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Traditions.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing.

Hall, G.E., Wallace, R.C. Jr., and W.A. Dossett. 1973. *A Developmental Conceptualization of the Adoption Proces within Educational Institutions.* Austin, TX: Research and Development Center for Teacher Education, The University of Texas.

Hord, S.M., and W.L. Rutherford, L. Hulling-Austin, and G. Hall. 1987. *Taking Charge of Change*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Moustakas, C. 1994. *Phenomenological Research Methods.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing.

Rogers, C. 1977. "The Interpersonal Relationship in the Facilitation of Learning" *The Helping Relationship Sourcebook.* Edited by D. Avila, A.W. Combs and W.W. Purkey. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.

The Grove Consultants International. 1994. *An Orientation to Facilitation—Fundamental Principles.* San Francisco: Authors.

Appendix A: REALIGN Inservice Training Process Sample Documents

1. REALIGN Fact Sheet
2. Collaborative Learning Team Newsletter
3. Learning Celebration Announcement
4. Minutes from GWU/FCPS Administrative Update
5. FCPS REALIGN Academy Level Course Syllabus
6. Summary of Collaborative Learning Projects 1995-8

Project REALIGN

A Partnership Between The George Washington University and Fairfax County Public Schools

Project REALIGN is about deepening the capacity of adults in our schools--teachers, specialists, paraprofessionals, administrators and parents, to function as powerful communities of adult learners committed to creating programs which enable each and every child to blossom to their full potential.

REALIGN Training, January 1996

What is Project REALIGN?

Project REALIGN is a model inservice training project designed to expand the capacity of early childhood staff, administrators and families to work together for the purpose of: (1) enhancing the quality of education for all young children and (2) maximizing opportunities for young children with disabilities to be active members of the school community. REALIGN is funded by the U.S. Department of Education Early Education Programs for Children with Disabilities and sponsored by The George Washington University Department of Teacher Preparation and Special Education in partnership with the Fairfax County Public Schools Department of Instructional Services and Department of Student Services and Special Education.

Project REALIGN is a site-based and site-driven approach to staff development in which early childhood staff, families, and administrators jointly identify and pursue goals and visions that are meaningful to their school community. Early childhood teams, representing preschool through first grade, in three public elementary schools in Fairfax County, Virginia, are currently piloting the REALIGN process.

What are the guiding ideas of REALIGN?

The path to change in the classroom core lies within and through professional communities--learning communities which generate knowledge, craft new norms of practice, and sustain participants in their efforts to reflect, examine, experiment and change. Sergiovanni, 1996, p. 172

Project REALIGN is based on the belief that, if schools are to thrive, they must be institutions of learning for adults as well as children. The vision of REALIGN is to create active, robust communities of adults in our schools who are committed to examining current practices and exploring strategies which improve learning opportunities for all children.

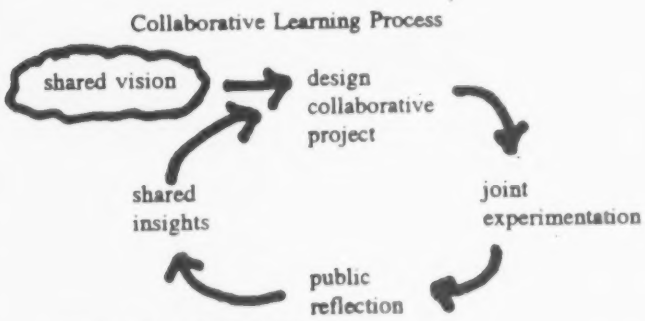
Project REALIGN is grounded in the theoretical constructs of organizational learning theory and systems thinking (Senge, 1990). Through a dynamic, emergent process, REALIGN seeks to build in schools norms and structures which support the existence of adult learning communities committed to improving programs for children and families.

The REALIGN process offers participants: (1) tools which strengthen their ability to engage in dialogue and collective learning, (2) methods which support the articulation of a shared vision and goals, and (3) a structure for collaborative inquiry and experimentation which promotes aligned action toward the group's vision.

How does REALIGN work?

The REALIGN training spans the course of a year. Initially the training engages participants in community-building activities which: (1) encourage the exchange of personal goals and values, (2) promote deeper understanding of the diverse philosophical and pedagogical backgrounds of the participants, and (3) help participants identify a shared purpose or vision for their community. An outcome of this stage is a shared sense of future direction with specific actions or goals identified by the community.

In the second stage, the community self-organizes into small collaborative project teams. Each team identifies a topic to study which is: (1) personally meaningful to each member of the project team and (2) aligned with the community's vision.



Adapted from Ryan, 1994

For several months each project team works together to mold their topic into a collaborative project. Using a collaborative project approach provides participants with "real-life" opportunities to tinker with new instructional models or strategies for improving programs for children and families, as well as practice skills of collaborative learning. The diagram on the left depicts the collaborative learning process.

The collaborative learning process concludes with the community coming together to celebrate the work that has been accomplished and to share insights. The sharing of these insights may signal a conclusion to the work of a project team or may lead to a refining goals with continued exploration and experimentation in the team's area of interest.

What are the Anticipated Outcomes of Project REALIGN?

Project REALIGN seeks to enhance the capacity of participants to:

- *collaboratively* create tools, methods, and know-how which are responsive to the needs of all young children in their school;
- maximize the capacity of their school to provide opportunities for young children with disabilities to be active members in the school community; and
- build knowledge and skills in areas that are personally meaningful and fulfilling.

References
Senge, P.M. (1990) *The Fifth Discipline*. NY, NY:Doubleday/Currency.
Sergiovanni, T.J. (1996) *Leadership for the Schoolhouse*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, Inc.
Ryan, S. (1994) "The emergence of learning communities" in ed. K.T. Wardman *Reflections on Creating Learning Organizations*. Cambridge, MA: Pegasus Communications, Inc.

Project REALIGN*Belle Willard Administrative Center*10310 Layton Hall Drive*Fairfax, VA 22030
Phone (703)246-7712*Fax(703)691-0677*E-mail:wald@gwis2.circ.gwu.edu

10/31/96

Project REALIGN
Collaborative Project Update

"The direction that learning takes is governed by one's felt needs and goals" Kolb

Technology Team

Laura Jones, Marla Oakes, Kathy Rini, Joyce Rose, Penny Schmitz and Amy Munds

The Technology Team joined together with a common desire to become more active users of technology in order to be better prepared to make decisions about technology and to support its effective use in learning environments.

The diversity of the team, both in professional orientation and in the range of individual experiences, skills and talents provoked an array of possibilities for exploration. As we searched for common ground, technology was envisioned as a range of options from computers to assistive technology devices. Animated discussions generated many issues to investigate, questions to answer and thoughts to ponder.

Each Technology Team meeting begins with members sharing something that they have learned in the area of technology since the last meeting. This supports all team members in becoming more familiar and comfortable with current hardware and software.

The team has decided to focus on two collaborative projects. The idea of sponsoring a *Technology Family Night* in the fall emerged out of a common desire to share technology information with families and the community. The team is also planning to explore how technology can enhance the transition process of children from preschool to kindergarten. The thoughtful learning that is growing from the explorations of the Technology Team is sure to enrich the Clearview Community.

-Maret Wahab, facilitator

"Keep-In-Touch" Team

Karen Brown, Jeanne Klingler, Connie Kissam

The "Keep-In-Touch Team is unique in that its membership is composed of two parents and a preschool home resource teacher—all individuals who frequent Clearview only on an occasional basis. Their interest converged around methods for enhancing the "welcoming" environment at Clearview for parents, community members and children.

After extended discussion and visits to other schools, both public and private, this team decided on a two-prong approach to their task. One goal is to ensure the community has concise information about Clearview's programs, activities and services at the preschool through first grade level. The committee has drafted an early childhood brochure, which describes school-sponsored programs and services at the preschool-K-1 levels. It is anticipated the brochure will be ready to distribute to families in the fall.

Secondly, the team decided to investigate ways to make the office area and entrance lobby more welcoming to children, families and community members. They are currently researching the topic in a variety of ways. Their final product will be a set of recommendations regarding (1) arrangement of the office; (2) roles for a designated "welcomer" secretary in the office; and (3) thoughts on working with PTA to develop a community bulletin board. These recommendations will be submitted to the administration and staff for their consideration.

As their work progresses, this team hopes to hear your ideas on enhancing the welcoming environment at Clearview.

-Sheryl Fahey, facilitator

Full-Day Kindergarten Team

Kelly O'Connell, Barbara Kauneckas, Val Martin, Vanessa Chambers, Sheila Bertrand

It was fun while it lasted. This team visited exemplary full-day kindergarten sites, dreamed of possibilities for Clearview, wrote an eloquent rational for why Clearview should have a full-day kindergarten, and even got their hopes up. But in the end, it appears Clearview will not have a full-day kindergarten due to the impact of the predicted growth of school population on existing space.

This small, energized team showed us all what could be accomplished quickly when a strong desire to succeed is the motivator. Each team member worked above and beyond the call of duty in a very collapsed period of time. Members of this team are now considering what is next for them. Count yourself lucky if they decide to attach their energy to your team!

-Penny Wald, facilitator (More news on the back)

"Everyone tinkers in a unique way. No one is limited to a particular method. Everyone is free to use his or her own best thinking to discover what works" Margaret Wheatley

---

Peer Interaction Team

Teri Walker, Nancy Butterfield, Jill Martin, Maureen Scott, Lyn Kohne, Karen Prior, Vibha Srinivas

The goal of the Peer Interaction Team is to identify strategies that promote peer interaction during play. This team comes to the table with a wealth of knowledge and a diversity of experiences in working with children. They have been actively involved in learning what it means to narrow and focus their topic of interest. Deciding which avenue to pursue regarding peer interaction has been an awesome task in and of itself.

As a team they have visited exemplary programs, reviewed current literature, examined peer interaction assessments and talked at length among themselves. After much discussion they decided to explore strategies that promote peer interactions during play. They first identified skills they felt children need in order to successfully (1) enter into play situations and (2) maintain play with others. Then they selected strategies or interventions that staff could use to help children learn these skills.

The Peer Interaction team is now "trying-on" these interventions and documenting their results. This will lead to further discussion about and refinement of interventions that support peer interaction. As a grand finale, the team hopes to have a workshop for staff and parents where they will teach others the strategies that have proven effective with their children. Good luck! We will be anxious to hear what you have learned!

-Ramona Wright, facilitator

Clarity of Expectations: Across and Within Grades

Carol Buldoc, Joanne Chen, Pat Smith, Beth Sisk, Amy Masters, Georgene Fromm, Dawn Phillips, Janine Becker, Mary Domes, Kelly O'Connell

The goal of this collaborative project is to establish common literacy benchmarks and assessment strategies that assist in reading transitions from K-1 and beyond. This project evolved out of the need to have (1) a shared understanding of the terms/behaviors identified on the PRI and (2) an agreed upon method for assessing progress along the PRI continuum.

The April meeting began with the team sharing information about the tools and methods that kindergarten and 1st grade use to assess literacy. Team members shared resources on literacy behaviors, record keeping and book leveling procedures. The PRI was compared to the ECAP with similarities and differences noted. The group discussed the need to consistently explain the PRI to the parents and have the documentation to support the assessed literacy level of the child. The team examined an array of assessment strategies, e.g., word lists, writing spree, running records, and discussed their usefulness in planning ongoing instruction and as transition documents.

The next big challenge of the Clarity of Expectations Team is to select four to five exiting books for each stage of the PRI and write an introduction for each book. The group will work together to identify books for exiting the Emergent stage and then divide into smaller groups to work on exiting books for other stages on the PRI, e.g., Developing Emergent and Novice stages. This team envisions this project to be the beginning steps in a larger effort to create consistency of expectations among all staff that use the PRI.

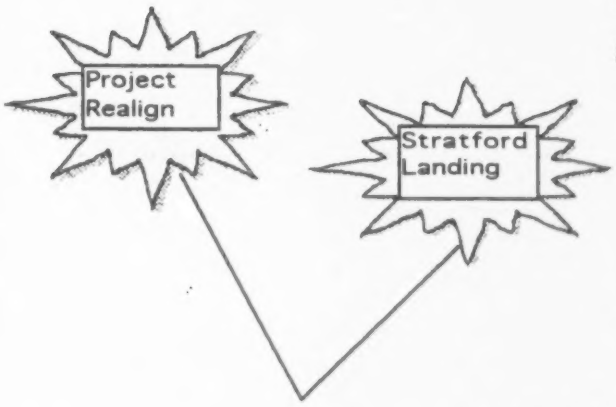
-Maura Burke and Laura Bell, facilitators

One who learns from one who is learning, drinks from a running stream.
Native American Origin

Next REALIGN Meeting:
Monday, May 19, 1997
1:30-3:30

Clarity of Expectations: 1st Grade Pod
Technology: Preschool Conference Room
Keep-In-Touch: Theater B
Peer Interaction: P-2 Ramona's Room

Questions? Call Penny Wald@ 246-7712
e-mail wald@gwis2.circ.gwu.edu



YOU ARE INVITED

TO THE STRATFORD LANDING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL EARLY CHILDHOOD COMMUNITY

LEARNING CELEBRATION

NOVEMBER 17, 1997

1:30 - 3:30

STRATFORD LANDING LIBRARY

Please join the following teams in celebrating the results of a two year commitment to collaborative work around a topic of mutual interest.

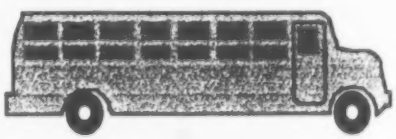
Transition Team

Evelyn Michaliga, Ruth Kuntz, Margaret Gunggoll, Audrey McCants, Connie O'Dell, Kathy Redelman, Linda Roberts, and Dianne Tucker

This diverse team investigated together how they might ease transitions for children from preschool through first grade. After have the opportunity to talk across grade levels and begin to explore each other's classrooms and programs, the group identified the use of "big books" as a transition tool for their children.

The value of technology in transition emerged out of the meetings and dialogues of this group. Mary Wilds was enlisted as the expert to work with the staff to further develop how technology could be integrated into all of their curriculums. Together, the staff developed increased their understanding of the tools available so that this common knowledge among the children would also facilitate transitions from grade to grade. Mary Wilds will support the continued study of technology across grade levels.

The transition team identified the time to meet across grade levels as VITAL to enhancing transitions for children and teachers.



The Community Integration Team

Tanya Lee,, Marty Brosky,Terrel White and Pam Pavuk

This team of three preschool teachers and one parent (now Stratford landing staff member),have put many, many hours into the development of a model of community integration for Stratford Landing.

Three of the afternoon preschool classes began integrating community children in their preschool classrooms this past September. Each classrooms has two children from the community attending on a daily basis. All of the children involved are having positive experiences.

Staff and children are learning and growing together in this inclusive environment. Currently, the staff are thrilled with the program and all of the benefits that it provides for ALL of the children in their classes.

(more project news on the back)

Professional Development Resource Center Team

Gail Cavalier, Mary Jane Hall, Ellen Hoffman, Ellen McClure, and Judi Elmore

This teams mission was to investigate how they might set up a professional development library at Stratford Landing. The group explored professional resource facilities in Fairfax County; which offer a wealth of information for teachers and parents . They identified numerous methods for organizing educational materials. One important similarity among the resource libraries was a knowledgeable, "in-charge" person to monitor the area.

A dream of a sunny, plant-filled space full of great resource material motivated this group to move forward in their quest. Staff would share knowledge at the cozy conference table area, and enjoy the nearby computer station, copy machine and coffee cart. Everyone would share in the responsibility for the upkeep of the center.

Current reality, however, prohibits the realization of this dream currently. As this group continues to dream, they have created a flip book outlining the current available resources with instructions on utilization for all staff.

So. . . .Enjoy!

Portfolio/Life Long Readers Team

Rebecca Kelly, Lisa DeSatnick, and Stephanie Falvey

The Portfolio team developed out of an interest in providing a more seamless method of assessment for children from preschool through second grade. After some changes in the team membership, the group has broadened their focus to include a long range vision for students. The collaborative team views efforts to help students become life long readers as an educational priority.

Team members shared successful strategies to realize these goals as they looked together at their own classrooms to discuss implementation of some of these strategies. These are a few of the ideas they hoped to incorporate in their classrooms:

- Incorporate information from Diane Snowball
- Provide feedback to students through individual note books using color coded messages.
- Investigate ways to label books to heighten interest.
- Investigate ways to make the environment and/or atmosphere more conducive to reading.
- Optimize the benefits of "buddy time" for reading.

This group has many more ideas to consider. They are united in their enthusiasm to develop life long readers and are anxious to share their findings during the November celebration!

The Preschool-Community Alliance Team (PCA)

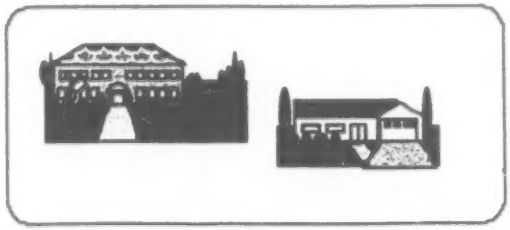
Peggy Cathro, Kim Jost, Kay Titerence, and Hilda Castillo

This collaborative project team has been working for two years to achieve their goals of providing a method of sharing information between parents, and school; providing social contact for families and staff; and ultimately building a stronger community among Stratford Landing preschool and FECEP families and school staff.

To this end, they created a survey of parental concerns, and interests. After evaluating the results of this survey, an evening parent meeting was held in May of 1997, which included a presentation on speech and language development, and a "make-it, take-it" project. This meeting was very well received by the parents who attended.

This year, the PCA sent out a new survey to reach parents new to Stratford Landing. Another evening parent meeting is scheduled for November.

It is the hopes of this group that this alliance will continue through the leadership of parents. They would like to see parents design the meetings with support and guidance from the staff.



We hope to see you on Nov. 17, 1997.

If you have any questions about Project REALIGN, please call Penny Wald or Andi Sobel at 246-7712

Project REALIGN
Administrative Meeting
December 3, 1996
Notes

Ray Healey. Elaine Barker. Holly Blum. Renna Jordan. Sheryl Fahey. Mike Castleberry. Claudia Chaille. Sheila Bertrand. Muriel Farley. Fredricka Phelps. Jane Lipp. Margaret Dougherty. Mary Surels. Penny Wald. Andrea Sobel

Introduction: Penny Wald - Utilizing large chart format described REALIGN process. Next, described, using large chart - a summary of year 1 project REALIGN.

Discussion: Group discussed the project with others sitting in their group.

Comments: Arising individually and from small group sharing:

- Ray Healey - stated that he supported the model - felt it was state of the art. Concerned as to how we (the system) could catch up - in terms of integration
- Elaine - stated that the project was not solely about integration but about supporting staff to collaborate to serve all children utilizing a continuum of services for special education services.

Principal Feedback:
Claudia Chaille/Stratford Landing

- The commitment of SL was enhanced through the Parent-Community-Alliance Project
- Looking at curriculum. the teachers interested in looking at Math the way literacy is addressed in the county. A math rich program is emphasized in this project. The visit to Reggio helped realize this projects as well as enhancing the classroom environments overall.
- The "wonder" project focused on integrated curriculum in am and pm classes. It involves the principal to help with scheduling. This group was able to articulate challenges in a forum that is useful for making changes.

Looking ahead to year III:

- Penny presented 3 options - chart
- Support of option 3
  - the intent of the project
  - need something ingrained in the system to support this type of training
  - in terms of trainers being full time teachers - mention of mentor program for beginning teachers.
  - principal support

- Combination of option 2 and 3
  - begin with central office support staff and move to option 3
  - the efficacy of year 1 trainers to do the training in year 3
  - key - trainers as leaders

- K-1 concerns
  - many comments about some of the potential difficulties
  - not sure what will happen in yr 3. K-1 may need more support

- Summary: Some sort of combination of options 2 and 3. Stratford and Clearview will determine what type of support will be needed in those schools for preschool, K and 1.
  - To finish REALIGN cycle and continue in same way in year 3, money needs to be set aside in county for Sept - Nov. 1998

Characteristics for new schools- discussion:

- Sites decide on the age range
- Schools containing preschools
- Schools compete - mindset that people might appreciate it more - ask schools to submit a short proposal to have REALIGN in their school
- Issue of children leaving preschool and moving to a school without integration
- Stay with same schools and expand to grade 6
- Look at feeder schools - clusters for Clearview and Stratford
- Look at a subset of cluster principals for 2 schools in 1 cluster or a school in each cluster. Look at K-3 in cluster school
- Move to 2-3 for third year
- Would like to look at ED and MR programs which are missing from current schools
- For K-3 group, 1 monday a month may be all that is realistic for staff time
- Subs may be an issue as there are not available subs currently
- K-3 at Stratford and Clearview (schools need to do a better job at

working with feeder schools through REALIGN or not)
- Include groups of teachers (ED and MR staff) from feeder schools
- What about the general ed. Component from feeder schools

Summary:

- Take 1 new school - as we already have feedback on adding new grade levels to preschool. Suggest:
  - 1 cluster school from either Stratford or Clearview: K-3 . School that contains ED and MR programs
  - 1 area 2 school: Preschool - 1 - primary work of trainers
  - Continued support to Stratford and Clearview as requested by each school (may include looking at another way to support 2-3)

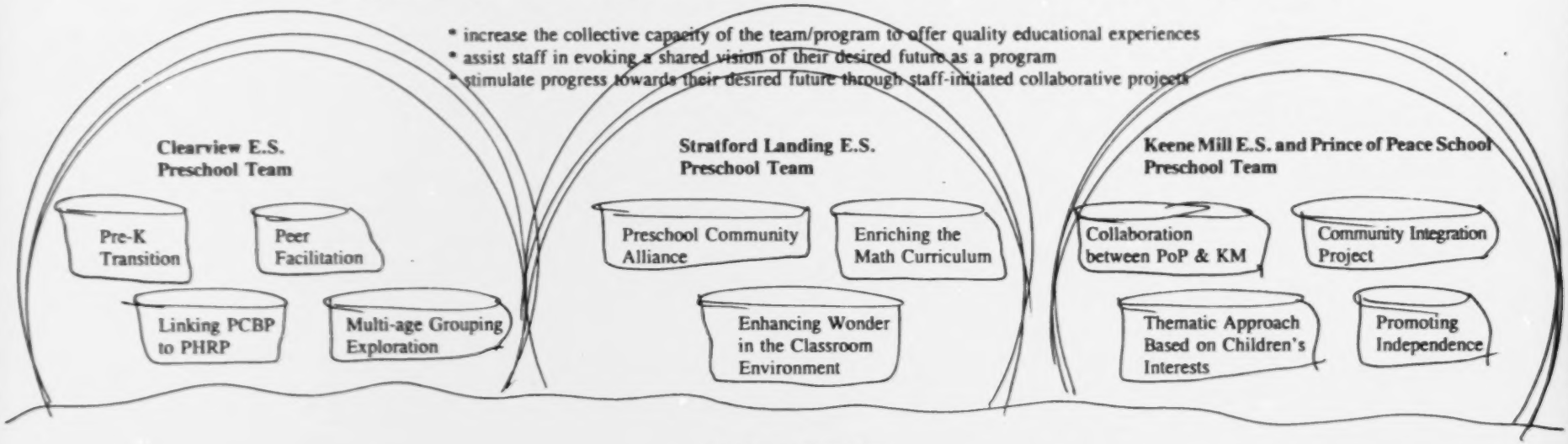
Project REALIGN

A Partnership between The George Washington University and Fairfax County Public Schools

Collaborative Projects at REALIGN Pilot Sites 1995-96

How can our early children program work together to improve the education of all the children we serve
and
maximize opportunities for children with disabilities to be active members of the school community.

- increase the collective capacity of the team/program to offer quality educational experiences
- assist staff in evoking a shared vision of their desired future as a program
- stimulate progress towards their desired future through staff-initiated collaborative projects



REALIGN Time Line

January — March — April — May — June — September — October — November

REALIGN Retreat
community-building
shared visioning

Learning Teams
Collaborative Project Development
define ~ explore ~ study ~ design ~ experiment ~ reflect ~ share

Learning Celebration
reflection and celebration
12/96

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

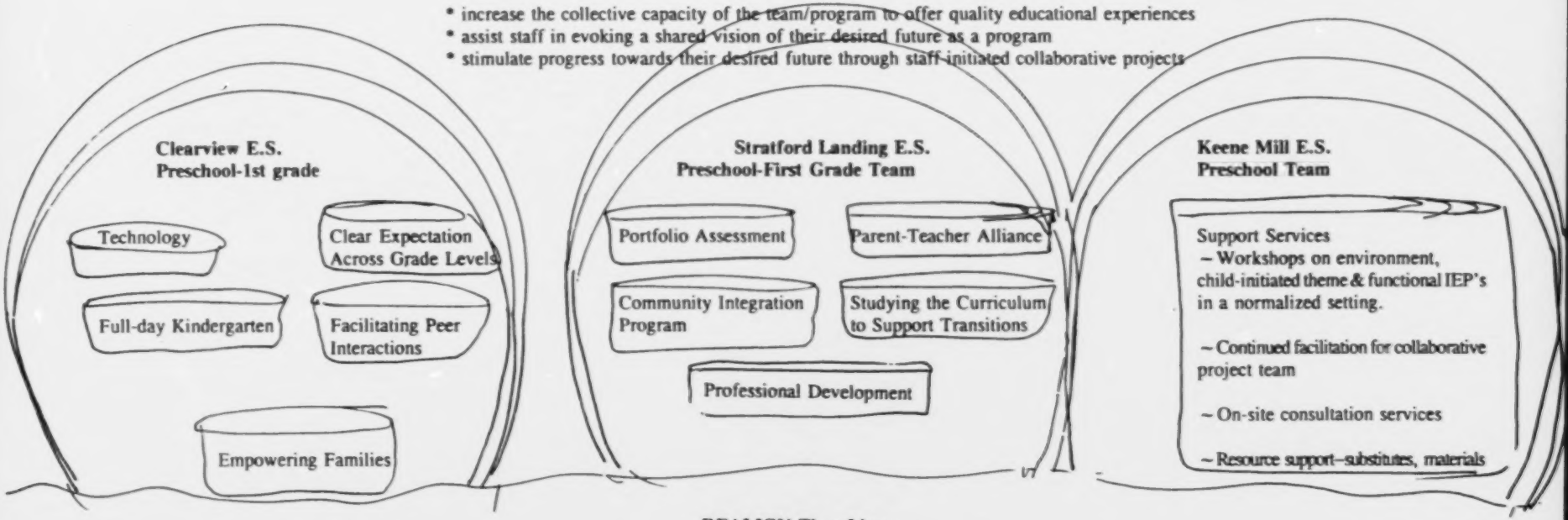
Project REALIGN

A Partnership between The George Washington University and Fairfax County Public Schools

Collaborative Projects at REALIGN Pilot Sites 1996-7

How can our early children program work together to improve the education of all the children we serve
and
maximize opportunities for children with disabilities to be active members of the school community.

- increase the collective capacity of the team/program to offer quality educational experiences
- assist staff in evoking a shared vision of their desired future as a program
- stimulate progress towards their desired future through staff-initiated collaborative projects



REALIGN Time Line

January_____March_____April_____May_____June_____September_____October_____November

REALIGN Retreat
community-building
shared visioning

Learning Teams
Collaborative Project Development
define – explore – study – design – experiment – reflect – share

Learning Celebration
reflection and celebration
drafted 12/96

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

FCPS Academy Level (Noncollege) Credit Course Syllabus

Course Title

Staff as Collaborative Learners:
Creating Quality Programs for Children with Diverse Needs

Course Purpose

The purpose of this course is to enhance the capacity of school-based early childhood teams to work collaboratively across disciplines to explore and implement new models or strategies for meeting the diverse needs of children in their program.

Intended Audience

The intended audience for this course is school-based early childhood teams. The early childhood teams must consist of at least **four (4)** members who teach at the preschool, K, 1 or 2 grade level in one school and include representation from both general and special education. Early childhood teams must be multidisciplinary and may be multi-level. Participating staff may include teachers, assistant teachers, therapists, specialists and/or administrators.

Course Description

This course is a year-long 3 credit (90 recertification points) FCPS Academy Credit Course. As part of the coursework, school-based early childhood teams will examine common values, purpose and beliefs about the teaching-learning process; create a shared vision of quality instruction for children in their program; and design and implement a collaborative project that moves the team in the direction of their vision. Teams participating in this course are responsible for selecting an area of study that will enhance the quality of education for diverse learners in their school. As teams work on their collaborative projects they will learn and apply strategies related to collaboration and team functioning.

Course Outcomes

An enhanced capacity to learn and grow as a multidisciplinary team

- understand ourselves, our gifts, aspirations and motivations
- understand and celebrate the diversity on our team
- understand how to be a member of a learning community

For the purpose of maximizing the learning environments for all children in our program

- deeper knowledge of instructional practices which are responsive to the diverse needs of students in our program
- increased opportunities for children with diverse needs and abilities to share learning experiences

Course Format

This year-long course consists of 45 hours of in-class work and 45 hours of out-of- class work. The 45 hours of in-class work begins in late September with a Friday-evening and Saturday-day retreat. Following the retreat, class sessions will be held monthly from November through June with the exception of December. The 45 hours of out-of-class activities include research, reading, journal writing, site visits, project development and group discussion. Participants are expected to dedicate approximately four hours per month to study and preparation, e.g., 2 hours for reading, research and observation; 1 hour for reflective journaling; and 1 hour for group discussion.

Course Requirements

1. Attendance: Attend class sessions and participate in all class activities.

2. Assignments:

   Readings and Journal Reflections: Read and write reactions to assigned articles and literature related to the project topic.

   Collaborative Learning Project and Process:

   a. Design and Implement a Collaborative Learning Project: Teams will identify an area of interest; research current literature on the topic; and design, implement and evaluate a project reflective of their topic.

   b. Learning Project Summary and Presentation: Teams will document their learning in a short written format. Teams prepare a 20 minute presentation on what they learned.

   c. Collaborative Learning Process: Teams will reflect on and share in a novel manner their experience of learning collaboratively.

Course Instructors and Facilitators

Instructors:	Karen Bump	Belvedere Elementary School	750-3679
	Amy King	Clearview Elementary School	318-8937
	Ramona Wright	Clearview Elementary School	318-8937
Facilitators:	Liz Bush	Hayfield Elementary School	924-4500
	Carol Flicker	Hutchison Elementary School	437-1033
	Jean Waylonis (part-time)	Belvedere Elementary School	750-3679

Session Focus and Assignments

Session #1 September 26 Introduction to Course

Focus

- Getting acquainted
- Share the process, beliefs, and expectations of the course

Session #2 September 27 Exploring New Ways of Being Together

Focus

- Discuss interests and aspirations of team members, both individually and as a team
- Share beliefs about teaching-learning process and outcomes for children
- Exploration of and agreement on norms for team communication

Session # 3 October 28 Learning Together

Focus

- Assessment of learning style preferences and their implications on group learning
- Introduction to the collaborative learning process
- Determine focus of team inquiry

To be done prior to this session

Readings

Ross, R., Smith, B., and C. Roberts (1994) "The wheel of learning", The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook, NY, NY: Doubleday pp. 59-65.

O'Neil, J. (1995) "On schools as learning organizations: a conversation with Peter Senge" Educational Leadership (52) 7 pp. 20-23

Journal Reflection

- Reflect on what you are passionate about in your work. Where are your passions leading you now?
- How do you see your passions being fulfilled in your work with your collaborative learning team?

Individual Homework

Complete the Learning Style Inventory and read over interpretative material.

Group Discussion

- Share what each person learned about his/her own passions.
- Identify common thinking and/or interests
- Come to the October 28th class with thoughts about common interests

Session #4 November 25 A New Way of Thinking

Focus

- Deepened understanding of the impact of assumptions on our thinking and acting
- Examination of global trends and their impact on education

To be done prior to this session

Readings

Nelson, G. Lynn "American dreaming in our schools: a time for change" Arizona State University: English Department.

Kim, Daniel (1994) "Paradigm-creating loops: how perceptions shape reality", in ed. by Kellie T. Wardman, Reflections on Creating Learning Organizations, Cambridge, MA: Pegasus Communications, Inc.

Elkind, David (1997) "Schooling and family in the postmodern world", in ed. by Andy Hargreaves, Rethinking Educational Change with Heart and Mind, Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Journal Reflection

"The future is like a radio band with infinite stations. The reality you are now experiencing is only one station on the band, completely convincing as long as you stay tuned in to it, but masking the other choices that lie on either side."

- What do the current societal trends say to you about who you need to be as a teacher?

Session #5 **January 13** **A New Way of Talking: Dialogue**

Focus

- Introduction to the attributes of dialogue

  -Suspend assumptions
  -Inquire into thinking behind statements
  -Embrace multiple perspectives
  -Listen deeply to ourselves and others

To be done prior to this session

Reading

Isaacs, William (1993) "Dialogue: the power of collective thinking", The Systems Thinker 4(3) p. 1-4.

Kennedy, David Knowles (1996) "After Reggio Emilia: may the conversation begin", Young Children, (July)

Journal Reflection

Think about a time when a conversation led to a deeper "meeting of the minds."

- What contributed to that happening?
- How did it effect you?

Session # 6 **February 3** **Who Speaks for You?**

Focus

- Raise awareness about the importance of "finding your voice"
- Deepen the capacity to solicit and hear multiple perspective

To be done prior to this session

Reading

Richert, Anna.E. ( ) "Voice and power in teaching and learning to teach" in ed. by Linda Valli, Reflective Teacher Education: Cases and Critiques, State University of New York Press.

Journal Reflection

Reflect on a time when your perspective was not considered or you did not feel able to contribute your ideas.

- How did you feel?
- What would have enhanced your ability to contribute?

Session # 7 March 3 What To Do When Things Get Ugly

Focus

- Increase ability to identify and respond to group communication problems
- Examine relationship between individual behavior and group success

To do prior to this session

Reading

McCoy, Bowen (1997) "The parable of Sadhu", Harvard Business Review. May, June.

Pugach, M. and Johnson, L. (1995) "Working with and supporting groups" in Collaborative Practitioners: Collaborative Schools, Denver, CO: Love Publishing Co.

Journal Reflection

- How does the purpose of this effort connect to my personal sense of purpose and the purpose of the school as a whole?

- Reflections on personal responsibility.

  What can I do to better contribute to this effort?
  How can I adapt?
  What can I do to succeed with existing resources?

Session # 8 March 31 Reflection—Deep Thinking

Focus

- Experience the value of reflection
- Practice strategies for reflective thinking

To be done prior to this session

Readings

Killion, Joellen P. and Todnem, Guy R. (1991) "A process for personal theory building" Educational Leadership 48(6) pp.14-16.

Cox, Thea (l996) "Teachable moments: socially constructed bridges" Advances in Early Education and Day Care (8) pp. 187-200.

Journal Reflection

Read over your journal entries from the beginning of the course.

➢ What thoughts and theories are emerging from your reflections?

Session #9 **May 5** **Sharing the Wealth**

Focus

- Share knowledge and insights gleaned from the collaborative learning project
- Acknowledge and celebrate individual contributions to the work of the group

To be done prior to this session

Group Work

1. Develop a 15-20 minute presentation that discusses the following:
   - your question
   - your method of exploration and key resources
   - your experiment, artifacts and reflections
   - lessons learned
2. Develop a brief paper or fact sheet that summarizes the above information.
3. Be prepared to present your information at a roundtable discussion.

Session #10 **June 2** **Sharing Our Insights**

Focus

- Sharing of insights gleaned from the *process* of collaborative learning
- Celebrate individual and group learning

To be done prior to this session

Journal Reflection

- What was a magical moment in your collaborative learning process? Why was it magical?
- What was a difficult time in your collaborative learning process? Has it been resolved? If so, how? If not, what are your current thoughts and feelings about the issue?

Group Homework

1. Make up a skit, song, poem, commercial, story about your team's experience of learning collaboratively.
2. Be prepared to share it with the group.

SCHOOL "A" (1995-1996)*

Year one participants included teachers and instructional assistants from five special education preschool classrooms (PSSE) and one general education preschool classroom (FECEP). Two parents participated as members of Collaborative Project Teams. Approximately sixty-five children with disabilities were impacted by Project REALIGN training during the 1995-96 school year. *(An additional eight children without disabilities were impacted during the 1996-97 school year.)*

Collaborative Project Titles

Collaboration Between Community Preschool Program and School "C"	Community Integration Preschool Program	Using the Thematic Approach Based on Children's Interests	Strategies to Promote Independence

Collaborative Project Team Composition

2 Administrators 2 PSSE Teachers 1 Instructional Assistant 1 Counselor 1 Parent	1 Administrator 4 PSSE Teachers 2 Instructional Assistants 2 parents	2 PSSE Teachers 2 Preschool Teachers 1 Instructional Assistant	3 Instructional Assistants 2 Speech / Language Clinicians

Notable Results of Collaborative Project Teams

•Increased support between staff at each school as concerns and ideas were exchanged. •A heightened awareness of importance of interacting with other programs •Increased ease in working with staff in other schools. •Reacquainted ourselves with behaviors common to all children. •Experienced connectedness among all preschool staff.	•Community model successfully implemented Fall '96 •Eight children from the community were included in the PSSE classes. •Invigorating professional collaboration among all preschool team members. •Team as whole feels more confident, collaborative and respectful of each other. •Team as whole is examining practices which are beneficial to all children •Team expresses a can-do attitude.	•Team as whole has common understanding and practice of thematic approach. •Children are more engaged in their learning. •Themes are coordinated with am. And pm. classes •Staff enjoy pooling materials/ideas to plan themes. •IEP objectives are worked on naturally in class environment.	•Involved entire team in the development of an independence booklet. •Children are making more choices for themselves •Children are happier and more excited. •Teachers are freed up to teach rather than micro-manage. •Staff has increased willingness to brainstorm, contribute, and try new ideas.

School "A" did not develop new teams during the 1996-97 school year. They continued efforts began in 1995-96 and received support from the Project REALIGN staff.

SCHOOL "B" (1995-1996)

Year one participants included teachers and instructional assistants from five special education preschool classrooms (PSSE) and one general education preschool classroom (FECEP). Two parents participated as members of Collaborative Project Teams. Approximately forty children with disabilities and fourteen children without disabilities were impacted by Project REALIGN training during the 1995-96 school year.

Collaborative Project Titles

Preschool - Community Alliance	Preparing Preschool Children for Transition through Enriching the Math Curriculum	Enhancing Wonder through our Classroom Environment

Collaborative Project Team Composition

1 PSSE Teacher 2 Parents 2 Instructional Assistants	1 Administrator 2 PSSE Teachers 1 Preschool Teacher	2 PSSE Teachers 3 Instructional Assistants 1 Speech/Language Clinician

Notable Results of Collaborative Project Teams

•Engaged team as a whole in the idea of developing a more give-and-take relationship with parents. •Learned about survey development in areas of family involvement. •Designed and mailed a parent/teacher involvement survey •Mapped out next steps	•Staff have a deeper knowledge of math curriculum in the early childhood years. •Staff is more aware of materials and instructional opportunities which support the development of math skills. •Children are demonstrating increased knowledge of math concepts/vocabulary •Awareness that collaborative learning projects can be fun and easy for staff.	•Classroom environments support a shared theme/concept in the am. and pm. •Activity areas submerge the children in the concept or theme •am and pm teams plan together regularly. •There is less work for set up and clean up each day. •The team as a whole changed their planning process as a result of this project. •The unresolved challenges/barriers have been clearly articulated.

SCHOOL "B" (1996-1997)

Year two participation was expanded to include the kindergarten and first grade programs at school "A". Participation included six preschool, one kindergarten and three first grade programs. Two parents were members of Collaborative Project Teams. Special education teachers and instructional assistants serving children in kindergarten and first grade were also represented in this report. During the 1996-97 school year, approximately seventy children with disabilities and one hundred children and twenty-five children without disabilities were impacted by Project REALIGN training.

Collaborative Project Titles

Transition Team	Professional Development Resource Center Team	The community Integration Team	The Preschool-Community Alliance Team (PCA)	Portfolio/Life Long Readers Team

Collaborative Project Team Composition

2 PSSE Teachers 1 Kindergarten Teacher 2 First Grade Teachers 1 Preschool Teacher 2 Instructional Assistants	3 Instructional Assistants 1 Special Education Teacher 1 Specialist	3 PSSE Teachers 1 Parent	2 Instructional Assistants 1 PSSE Teacher 1 Parent	1 First Grade Teacher 2 Instructional Assistants

Notable Results of Collaborative Project Teams

•Moved from desiring an all encompassing impact to a more narrowly defined project. •Developed a plan around best practices in transition •Incorporated the use of "Big Books" into a transition plan. •The role of technology as a transition tool emerged from their collaborative investigations •The increased understanding and collaboration across grade levels noted as a primary result of their work together.	• An awareness of the importance of a "place" within the school building for the benefit of staff emerged from this project. • Instructional Assistants gained confidence and "voice" while participating in collaborative inquiry. •Realized the importance of infrastructure issues around finances, support and space. •A "flip book" was created to conveniently describe current available resources with instructions on utilization.	•Community model successfully implemented Fall '97 •Six children from the community were included in three PSSE classes. •Importance of parent collaboration highlighted through meeting •Realization that a group of teachers could created something of personal meaning that is separate from the work of the preschool team. •Team continues to the benefits to all children and families in their programs.	•Two year project : parent member was new this year. - Realization that including parents in collaborative efforts requires renewed efforts yearly. •Received new information from survey distribution. •Two parent meetings were held around topics of parent interest •Parents of children with and without disabilities attended meetings. •Group hope to support parents in continuing the efforts initiate by this project team.	•Team evolved as membership changed and a new vision grew out of shared interests. •The group identified the need for children to become "life long readers" as an educational priority for their students. •Group became more aware of own practices and those of each other that promote "life long reading" •Trough their work together, new strategies were investigated and shared.

SCHOOL "C" (1995-1996)

Year one participants included teachers and instructional assistants from seven special education preschool classrooms (PSSE) and one general education preschool classroom (FECEP). Two parents participated as members of Collaborative Project Teams.Three home resource teachers were also active participants on a team. Approximately seventy children with disabilities and fourteen children without disabilities were impacted by Project REALIGN training during the 1995-96

Collaborative Project Titles

Establishing Collaboration for Preschool-Kindergarten Transition	Preschool Center-Based and Home Resource Programs Linking with the Community	Facilitating Peer Interaction during Activity Time	Exploring the use of Multi-age Grouping to Meet Diverse Needs in Preschool Community.

Collaborative Project Team Composition

1 PSSE Teacher 1 Parent 1 Occupational Therapist 1 Physical Therapist	1 PSSE Teacher 3 Home Resource Teachers 1 Speech Therapist 1 Parent	5 PSSE Teachers 3 Instructional Assistants	1 Preschool Teacher 6 Instructional Assistants

Notable Results of Collaborative Project Teams

•Moved from desiring an all encompassing impact to a more narrowly defined project. •Developed a plan around best practices in transition •Scheduled first steps of the transition plan •Experienced the difficulty of working on a team representing divergent perspectives and interests.	•Brought home resource services to community (e.g. Parent workshops) •Improved transition process between home resource and center based programs. •Families of home resource children now feel part of a neighborhood community. (Making friends, etc.) •Home resource and center based staff know each other; support is better	•Database of social goals completed •Selected observation techniques •List of strategies to facilitate peer interaction. •List of environmental modifications. •Plan for future experimentation with this project. •Surprise that the group accomplished so much.	•Increased knowledge of multi-age models and benefits. •Included a range of ages in community integration classes. •Reorganized environments to provide materials that support a range of abilities. •Children are learning more from peers. •Children having fun •Adults able to observe more.

SCHOOL "C" (1996-1997)

Year two participation was expanded to include the kindergarten and first grade programs at school "B". Participation included nine preschool, one kindergarten and three first grade programs. Two parents were members of Collaborative Project Teams. Special education teachers and instructional assistants serving children in kindergarten and first grade were also represented in this report. During the 1996-97 school year, approximately ninety-five children with disabilities and one hundred and fifty children without disabilities were impacted by Project REALIGN training.

Collaborative Project Titles

Keep In Touch With You	Peer Interaction	The Technology Team	Clarity of Expectations

Collaborative Project Team Composition

2 Home Resource Teachers 2 Parents	4 PSSE Teachers 2 Instructional Assistants	4 PSSE Teachers 1 Instructional Assistant 1 Speech/Language Clinician	2 Kindergarten Teachers 4 First Grade Teachers 2 Special Education Teachers 1 Specialist

Notable Results of Collaborative Project Teams

•Developed game to display results of investigation into exciting places for children and families to visit in the community. •Through discussions and input from school staff, recommendations were given to create a warm, welcoming environment for parents and community in school building. •Group developed a brochure to help parents identify important programs and services at school.	•Planned and implemented Peer Interaction Coffee which was held for school staff as well as other community early childhood educators to discuss strategies to support peer interaction among young children. •Researched and developed new strategies to promote and support peer interaction among young children with and without disabilities.	•Planned and implemented Family Technology Night at school. •Group was able to increase personal technology skills and shared those new competencies with others.	•Group identified books as benchmarks for: emergent, novice, apprentice and developing stages of the PRI curriculum. •As part of their work, a process was developed for collaboratively accomplishing this task.

SCHOOL "D" (1997-1998)

Year three participants included teachers, instructional assistants, and specialists from an entire elementary school staff. Staff and parents from special education preschool classrooms (PSSE), general education and special education classrooms ranging from grades one through 6, participated in project REALIGN. Three parents participated as members of Collaborative Project Teams. Approximately sixty-five children with disabilities, thirty children who were learning English as a second language, and one hundred and seventy-five children without disabilities were impacted by Project REALIGN training at this site during the 1997-98 school year.

Collaborative Project Titles

Meeting the Needs of all Children	Parent Involvement	The Communication Team	The Technology Team

Collaborative Project Team Composition

2 General Education Teachers 1 General Ed Instructional Assistant 2 Special Education Teachers 3 Special Ed Instructional Assistants 1 Speech/Language Clinician	2 Parents 3 General Education Teachers 1 Physical Therapist	1 Parent 1 ESL Teacher 4 PSSE Teachers 3 Special Ed Instructional Assistants 1 Speech/Language Clinician	2 General Education Teachers

Notable Results of Collaborative Project Teams

• Shared ideas across disciplines and grade levels related to providing extra support for children who are not succeeding in general education classrooms. • Investigated how other schools were meeting this challenge. • Explored the notion of a resource room to support children • Investigated the use of volunteers to staff the resource room. • Discussed grant opportunities to raise funds for project	• Developed a survey for parents and staff to elicit input regarding how they might enhance the quality of parent involvement in their school. • Investigated resources available within the community • Identified barriers to parent involvement • Explored ways to redefine and increase parent involvement in their school community.	• Explored various methods to enhance communication for preschool children with communication challenges. • Studied and experimented with picture/symbol programs. • Experimented with expanding sign language use. • Explored and experimented with sound boxes • Developed interactive books for use by children in classroom • Explored the use of sign language to enhance specific sounds and words for ESL children.	• Initiated a multi-year project aimed at researching and acquiring technology applications to enhance the fourth grade curriculum. • Identified a major barrier consisting of incompatible software and hardware currently used in the school.

SCHOOL "E" (1997-1998)

Year three participants included teachers, instructional assistants, and specialists from an entire elementary school staff. Staff representing special education and general education students ranging from grades K through 6, participated in project REALIGN collaborative learning teams. Three parents participated as members of Collaborative Project Teams. Approximately eighty-five children with disabilities, and 515 children without disabilities were impacted by Project REALIGN training at this site during the 1997-98 school year. This elementary school is a Combined Services Model pilot school with an inclusive philosophy and a special education staff that functions non-categorically.

Collaborative Project Titles

Strategies for Children With Challenging Behavior	Teaching computer Skills through Elementary School	WHES: Hayfield TV Morning Show	PRI Project

Collaborative Project Team Composition

4 General Education Teachers 1 Special Education Teacher 2 Specialists	3 General Education Teachers 1 Instructional Assistant	2 General Education Teachers 2 Special Education Teachers 1 Instructional Assistant 2 Specialists	4 General Education Teachers

Notable Results of Collaborative Project Teams

• Surveyed staff to determine consistency of behavioral expectations across school. • Studied and implemented several behavioral interventions. • Created a forum of focused discussion about behavior issues.	• Developed a technology progress report for K-6 that incorporates all of the VA state Standards of learning. • Designed chart that identified various grade levels at which skills should be introduced, practiced and mastered. • Demonstrated a hands-on computer "hardware" training.	• Developed a protocol for a student-run TV show. • Produced 4 shows designed to represent the diversity of the Hayfield School community.	• Developed a PRI Writing sample booklet. • Led staff development workshop on evaluating writing samples using the PRI. • Created procedure for evaluating PRI levels in grades K-2. Improved consistency in PRI use among and between grade levels.

SCHOOL "E" (1997-1998) continued

Collaborative Project Titles

School-Wide Behavior Plan	Reader's Theater	WEB Page Design	Team Teaching Strategies	Pottery

Collaborative Project Team Composition

1 Instructional Assistant 2 Special Education Teachers 1 Specialist 1 Administrator	4 General Education Teachers 1 Instructional Assistant 1 Administrator	1 General Education Teacher 1 Specialist	2 General Education Teachers 3 Special Education Teachers 1 Speech/Language Clinician	1 Specialist

Notable Results of Collaborative Project Teams

• Exchanged ideas among grade levels regarding group behavior management strategies. • Presented school-wide discipline programs in other schools to faculty.	• Investigated, studied and implemented Readers Theater as a strategy for meeting the needs of diverse readers in inclusive settings.	• Explored multiple software applications for web page. • Selected software that allows student participation in design and maintenance. • Enrolled in web page training scheduled for Summer, 1998.	• Collected resources about co-teaching • Explored models of co-teaching • Increased the capacity to communicate effectively among team members	• Explored pottery as a medium for including children with special needs in inclusive art programs • Acquired a potters' wheel for the school

Academy Level Course (1997-1998)

Fourteen Fairfax County Public School staff earned 90 recertification points through their participation in a year long FCPS staff development course. Participants included early childhood teams representing multiple disciplines, grade levels and rolls from four different elementary schools.

Collaborative Project Titles

Armstrong Team	Transition Planning Team	The PRI Project

Collaborative Project Team Composition

1 General Education Teacher 1 Special Education Teacher 1 Instructional Assistant 1 Occupational Therapist 1 Speech/Language Clinician	2 General Education Teachers 2 Special Education Teachers 1 General Education Preschool Teacher	4 General Education Teachers

Notable Results of Collaborative Project Teams

• Developed and piloted a tool to facilitate co-planning between classroom teachers and specialists for children with disabilities in inclusive settings. • Engaged primary staff in considering the value of regularly scheduled general and special education team planning sessions to evaluate student progress and plan next steps. • Improved ability of early childhood multi-disciplinary teams to identify strengths and needs of children with IEPs.	• Developed a plan which supports students with disabilities in transitioning from one grade to the next. • School staff was enrolled in the idea of developing a school-wide transition plan. • A transition plan was incorporated into the school plan.	• Developed a PRI Writing Sample Booklet. • Lead a staff development workshop on evaluatory writing samples using the PRI. • Created a procedure to be used in K-2 for evaluating PRI levels. • Improved consistency in PRI use among and between grade levels.

Appendix B: REALIGN Facilitator Development Program Sample Documents

1. Description of the Facilitator Development Program
2. Application for Facilitator Development Program

REALIGN Facilitation Development Program

The primary goal of Project REALIGN is to expand the capacity of early childhood staff, administrators and families to work together for the purpose of: (1) enhancing the quality of education for all young children and (2) maximizing opportunities for young children with disabilities to be active members of the school community. A secondary goal of Project REALIGN is to provide train-the-trainer experiences to selected staff, administrators and families in FCPS preparing them for future leadership roles in the REALIGN staff development process.

What Can I Expect to Learn in the REALIGN Facilitation Development Program?

The REALIGN Facilitation Development Program is an emerging program. This is the second year that FCPS staff have participated in the facilitation development process. The goal of this program to prepare selected staff, administrators and/or parents to take leadership roles in the REALIGN staff development process. The REALIGN training is a site-based, staff-driven approach to staff development. The content of the staff development is determined by the participants. The work of the facilitator is to design and lead activities/processes which assist the participants in working collectively to identify and accomplish their goals. The facilitator assumes the role of a guide rather than a content expert Below is a list of competencies that have been identified as key to being a successful REALIGN facilitator.

Competencies of a REALIGN Facilitator

I. Personal Commitment to Life Long Learning

II. Knowledge about Adult Learners
- -knowledge of learning styles
- -identify stages of adult learning/knowing
- -strategies for accessing group members' experiences, needs and expectations

III. Knowledge of the REALIGN Conceptual Framework and Technical Process
- -understand the constructivistic model of adult learning and staff development
- -understand the REALIGN change model
- -strategies for community building
- -strategies for shared visioning
- -strategies for collaborative learning

IV. Mastery of the Facilitation Process
- -understand the facilitation sequence
- -recognize and negotiate different expectations
- -strategies which support group learning and movement toward a goal

V. Effective Group Communication Skills
- -active listening, e.g. listen, summarize, clarify, reflect
- -negotiate shared understanding/meaning
- -support a balance of inquiry and advocacy
- -support multiple perspective taking
- -recognize and use ladder of inference
- -support all voices being heard

VI. Management of Group Processes
- -create balance between group's trust and task orientations
- -establish group norms
- -manage group stress and conflict
- -read and respond to group defensive routines (fight/flight, polarization)
- -help group examine their behavior

How does the REALIGN Facilitation Development Program work?

The Facilitation Development Program is a multi-year process which provides the candidates with multiple exposures to the content and processes of the training and provides increased responsibilities in delivering the training. Penny Wald, Project Director, has primary responsibility for the facilitation development component. Facilitation development activities include:

Year I

I. Observe/assist at training events

II. Participate in five (5) training seminars
Pre-Seminar Reading = heightened awareness
Seminar = guided exploration and discussion (3:45-5:45 Dates TBD)
Homework = practical application to support continued exploration and reflection

III. Develop personal learning plan to guide Year II learning

IV. Contribute to the development of the Inquiry Program
Summer 3 day work-study retreat with $75/day stipend

Year II

I. Participate as a member of a Facilitation Team

II. Further study in the Vision-based Change Process

III. Contribute to the development of the Inquiry Program
Summer work-study retreat (stipend)
Product development opportunities (writing stipend)
Project dissemination opportunities (present at conferences)

Year III and after

I. Be an active member of FCPS REALIGN facilitation team.

Who is eligible to apply for the REALIGN Facilitation Development Program?

In the 1996-7 school year, **approximately four (4)** candidates will be selected to participate in the Facilitation Development Program. Any staff member or parent who has been involved in Project REALIGN during the 1995-96 school year is invited to apply for this opportunity. Interested principals, kindergarten and first grade general educators and primary-level special educator/therapists are also invited to apply.

How do I apply?

There are two parts to the application process:

(1) completion of the application form
(2) submission of a brief written principal recommendation

Applications are available from Penny Wald at Belle Willard Administrative Center. Penny can be reached at Belle Willard (246-7712) or at her home office (549-9690). The deadline for the receipt of the application is **November 25, 1995.** All applications should be mailed in the pony to: Penny Wald/Project REALIGN/Belle Willard Administrative Center/Trailer or faxed to Penny Wald/Trailer (703) 691-0677.

How will candidates be selected?

All applications will be reviewed by a selection committee composed of FCPS and GWU representatives. A maximum of eight candidates will be interviewed for the position with four selected for the 1996-7 school year. *It is anticipated the interviews will be held the first week of December and Facilitator candidates announced by December 13, 1996.*

PROJECT REALIGN: The Inquirer Program

A Collaborative Project of
The George Washington University and Fairfax County Public Schools

Application for A Train-the-Trainer Position
in the REALIGN Facilitation Development Program

The completion of this application indicates your interest in participating in the Inquirer Program: the REALIGN Facilitation Development Program. Four candidates will be selected for the 1996-97 school year using a panel interview process and a reference check as criteria for selection. Applications are **due by November 25, 1996**.

All applications should be should be mailed in the pony to: Penny Wald/Project REALIGN/Belle Willard Administrative Center/Trailer or faxed to Penny Wald/Trailer (703) 691-0677. Please feel free to leave a message for Penny Wald at 246-7712 (BWAC)/(703) 549-9690 (home office)/e-mail:wald@gwis2.circ.gwu.edu if you want to know more about the opportunity.

Documents to be included with this application.

1. A brief resume (informal is fine)
2. Principal recommendation
3. Statement of interest in the position (see last question on this page).

This application is **due** no later than November 25, 1996. Thanks.

Name_____

Phone: (W)_____ best time to call _____ (H)_____

Please list any inservice training or professional presentations you have lead or co-lead.

Have you ever served as a mentor or coach to a teacher or paraprofessional? Yes No
If yes, could we contact the person you have mentored?

_____ _____
name phone

List one person you feel could speak to your ability to: (1) promote teamwork and (2) design and lead staff development activities.

_____ _____
name phone

On a separate sheet briefly (one or two paragraphs) describe why this position is of interest to you.

Appendix C: REALIGN Evaluation Instruments

1. REALIGN Final Evaluation
2. REALIGN Retrospective Interview Questions
3. REALIGN Follow-up Interview
4. REALIGN Questionnaire on Integration and Collaboration
5. Facilitator Open-ended Statements of Concern
6. Facilitator Personal Learning Plan

Project REALIGN Final Evaluation
Fairfax Villa Elementary School
May 1998

Grade	___Preschool	___Primary (K-3)	___Intermediate (4-6)	**Project Topic**
Discipline	___Reg. Ed.	___Spec. Ed.		___ Parent involvement ___ Communication
Position	___Teacher ___Therapist ___Parent	___Instructional Assistant ___Administrator ___Specialist		___ Meeting needs of all children ___ Technology

Thank you for sharing some final thoughts about your experiences with Project REALIGN.

1. In your opinion, what do you see as the purpose of Project REALIGN?

2. How do you see your project impacting the children, families and/or staff in your program?

3. For you, what was the most important outcome of working on a collaborative learning team?

4. Are there topics you would like to continue exploring with staff and/or parents at your school?
If yes, please list ideas.

Rate your level of satisfaction with the work your collaborative learning team has accomplished this year.

1	2	3	4	5
Not satisfied		somewhat satisfied		very satisfied

Rate your level of satisfaction with what you have accomplished on a personal level in your collaborative learning team this year.

1	2	3	4	5
Not satisfied		somewhat satisfied		very satisfied

What has contributed to your satisfaction or dissatisfaction?

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Project REALIGN Final Evaluation
Stratford Landing Elementary School
November 1997

Grade	__Preschool	__Primary	**Project Topic**
Discipline	__Reg. Ed.	__Spec. Ed.	____ Portfolio Assessment ____ Transition Team
Position	__Teacher	__Instructional Assistant	____ Preschool/ Community Alliance
	__Therapist	__Administrator	____ Professional Resource Center
	__Specialist	__Parent	____ Community Integration

Thank you for sharing some final thoughts about your experiences with Project REALIGN.

1. In your opinion, what do you see as the purpose of Project REALIGN?

2. What impact do you feel your participation in Project REALIGN had on your program?

3. What impact do you feel your participation in Project REALIGN had on the early childhood professional community at your school, e.g., staff at preschool, kindergarten and first grade levels?

4. For you, what was the most important outcome of working on a collaborative project team?

5. Are there topics you would like to continue exploring with early childhood staff and/or parents at your school? If yes, please list ideas.

Rate your level of satisfaction with the work your REALIGN collaborative project team has accomplished this year.

1 Not satisfied 2 somewhat satisfied 3 very satisfied

Rate your level of satisfaction with what you have accomplished on a personal level with REALIGN this year.

1 Not satisfied 2 somewhat satisfied 3 very satisfied

What has contributed to your level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction?

Project REALIGN
Retrospective Interview Questions

Interviewer Comments regarding confidentiality:

- *Your Comments may be used in the evaluation document but your identity will remain confidential.*
- *In the event that we use your comments in the report, we will give you the opportunity to review the report to ensure than any quotes are correct.*

Let's start by looking broadly at REALIGN and its impact.

1. In your opinion, what was the purpose or main intent of project REALIGN?

2. What impact did participation in Project REALIGN have on you personally and professionally?

3. What impact did participation in Project REALIGN have on your early childhood staff?

Now let's focus for a minute on what it felt like to ba a part of a Collaborative Learning Team. I would like you to reflect on what is was like to be a member of a team that was involved in collaboratively conceiving and developing a project.

4. What team were you a member of?

5. Describe your experience of working on a collaborative learning team? What significant experiences or memories stand out for you?

6. *For teachers:* a) Was there a parent on your team?

   b) What was your experience of working with a parent on a collaborative learning team?

7. What do you think were significant results of your project?

Finally, I would like you to share your thoughts about REALIGN as a staff development model. As a model, REALIGN has three components:

•The first component is a two day retreat designed to promote community building and the sharing of beliefs, goals and future directions for the early childhood staff.
• In the second component, staff members organize themselves into collaborative project teams to explore topics that are personally interesting as well as meaningful to the whole.
•Finally, there is a learning celebration where all participants come together as a whole to share projects and insights.

8. What do you think about REALIGN as a staff development model?

9. Are there specific components or even parts of the components that you feel are more valuable than others?

Thank you for your participation!

Project REALIGN
Follow-up Interview
Clearview

Purpose: to look at carryover effects of this type of staff development model. When specific supports are withdrawn from the process. Do aspects meaningful to a particular community tend to continue?

1. How are you currently addressing areas of interest and professional growth in your programs?

2. Can you identify any relationship to your current practices with your work with Project REALIGN?

3. Are there any specific beliefs, strategies, or skills related to your experiences with REALIGN that support your current efforts in the area of professional growth?

4. Clearview is unique in having individuals on staff who were trained in facilitation techniques. What impact, if any do you feel that has on your work together?

Project REALIGN

Questionnaire on Integration and Collaboration

Your answers will remain confidential. No individual data will be reported.
A copy of the results will be available upon request.
Thank you for your participation.

Section I

Directions: Please respond to all questions, either by placing a check mark ☑ in the box which corresponds to your answer, or writing your responses in the space provided. Your answers will remain confidential.

1. Please check your current position:
   - ❑ Principal / Assistant Principal
   - ❑ Parent
   - ❑ Regular Education Teacher
   - ❑ Regular Education Instructional Assistant
   - ❑ Special Education Teacher
   - ❑ Special Education Instructional Assistant
   - ❑ Therapist
     Please specify _____
   - ❑ Other
     Please specify _____

2. How long have you served children at this school in your current position? _____

3. Please indicate the age of the children you work with most frequently:
   - ❑ Preschool
   - ❑ Kindergarten
   - ❑ Primary

4. Please indicate the settings in which you deliver services:
   - ❑ General education classroom
   - ❑ Special education self-contained classroom
   - ❑ Integrated classroom
   - ❑ Home Based
   - ❑ Therapy room

5. Your gender:
   ❑ Female ❑ Male

6. Please indicate the highest degree you hold:
   - ❑ High School Diploma / GED
   - ❑ CDA
   - ❑ Associate degree
   - ❑ Bachelor's degree
   - ❑ Master's degree
   - ❑ Doctorate degree

7. How many years of experience do you have in your current profession? _____

8. Circle the number of college/university courses you have completed in special education:

   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 or more

If you are a general education teacher/instructional assistant please answer all of the remaining questions. If you are not a general education teacher, please go to Section II.

9. How many students are enrolled in your class? If you have multiple classes (e.g., morning and afternoon sessions with different children), list the average between the morning and afternoon sessions. _____

10. If you have been asked to include children with disabilities in your classroom, do you feel that you have been given adequate training to do so?
    ❑ Yes ❑ No

11. How many students in your class(es) have individualized educational programs (IEP's)? _____

12. How many of the students identified in item 12 go to a special education classroom (including resource room) for some part of the school day? _____

13. If a student with disabilities is in your class:

    a. Is a paraprofessional assigned to your class because of the student? ❑ Yes ❑ Some ❑ No

    b. Do you know the student's IEP goals and objectives? ❑ Yes ❑ Some ❑ No

Section II

Attitudes about Integration

Directions: For each of the following statements, please circle the number that indicates your level of agreement. Your answers will remain confidential.

	Strongly Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree
1. In integrated settings children with disabilities tend to develop a poor self concept.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Integrated programs are better able to improve the academic skills of children with disabilities.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Integrated programs are better able to prepare children with disabilities to function in their community.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Integrated programs are better able to prepare children without disabilities for life in communities with diverse individuals.	1	2	3	4	5
5. The educational needs of children without disabilities are compromised in integrated classrooms.	1	2	3	4	5
6. In integrated settings the regular educator must devote most of his/her attention to the student with disabilities.	1	2	3	4	5

Section III

Directions: Read each statement carefully. Please circle the number that best represents your response. Your answers will remain confidential. In column 1, Typical Practice, select the choice that best describes typical practice in your class or school. Circle N/A for those items that do not apply to you. In column 2, Importance, choose the response that best indicates how important this practice is to you.	**Typical Practice** 5 Always 4 3 Sometimes 2 1 Never N/A Not Applicable	**Importance** 5 Very Important 4 3 Moderately Important 2 1 Not Important N/A Not Applicable
Example:	Never ... Always	Not Important ... Very Important
1. Time is allocated for staff to problem solve together.	N/A 1 (2) 3 4 5	N/A 1 2 3 4 (5)
Collaborative Practices		
1. I am always clear about my role and responsibilities when working collaboratively with other staff.	N/A 1 2 3 4 5	N/A 1 2 3 4 5
2. When problem solving I always feel that my perspective is solicited and valued.	N/A 1 2 3 4 5	N/A 1 2 3 4 5
3. Our staff regularly has reflective conversations about the values and beliefs that influence our instructional decisions.	N/A 1 2 3 4 5	N/A 1 2 3 4 5
4. Our staff clarifies clinical terminology when discussing student issues.	N/A 1 2 3 4 5	N/A 1 2 3 4 5
5. Decisions are made by the staff members responsible for their implementation.	N/A 1 2 3 4 5	N/A 1 2 3 4 5
6. Our staff has a clear understanding of student expectations within and across grade levels.	N/A 1 2 3 4 5	N/A 1 2 3 4 5
7. Our staff takes collective responsibility for school practices and outcomes.	N/A 1 2 3 4 5	N/A 1 2 3 4 5
8. Our staff works together to articulate shared goals for students.	N/A 1 2 3 4 5	N/A 1 2 3 4 5
9 There are opportunities for dialogue and planning across teams and grades.	N/A 1 2 3 4 5	N/A 1 2 3 4 5
10. There is time and support for professional collaborative development that improve curriculum and instruction.	N/A 1 2 3 4 5	N/A 1 2 3 4 5
11. There is a cooperative approach between school administration and teaching staff in exploring new strategies and programs.	N/A 1 2 3 4 5	N/A 1 2 3 4 5
12. Risk taking and innovation are encouraged in our school.	N/A 1 2 3 4 5	N/A 1 2 3 4 5

	Typical Practice 5 Always 4 3 Sometimes 2 1 Never N/A Not Applicable	**Importance** 5 Very Important 4 3 Moderately Important 2 1 Not Important N/A Not Applicable
	Never Always	Not Important Very Important

Integration Practices

The following items are applicable only to staff who teach both children with and without disabilities during any portion of the day.

1. Students with disabilities in my class are grouped with students who have equal or similar ability levels.	N/A 1 2 3 4 5	N/A 1 2 3 4 5
2. My classroom management strategies are the same for children with and without disabilities.	N/A 1 2 3 4 5	N/A 1 2 3 4 5
3. My classroom is arranged so that students with disabilities can utilize most, if not all, the same instructional materials as students without disabilities.	N/A 1 2 3 4 5	N/A 1 2 3 4 5
4. Students with disabilities are expected to make progress on their IEP objectives while participating in instruction with students without disabilities.	N/A 1 2 3 4 5	N/A 1 2 3 4 5
5. Structures are in place for students to demonstrate skill acquisition in alternative ways, i.e. portfolio, projects	N/A 1 2 3 4 5	N/A 1 2 3 4 5
6. Instruction of students with disabilities is viewed by all staff as a joint responsibility of special and general educators.	N/A 1 2 3 4 5	N/A 1 2 3 4 5
7. Students with disabilities receive most if not all of their special education and related services in general education settings.	N/A 1 2 3 4 5	N/A 1 2 3 4 5
8. All staff involved in integrated programming are personally committed to the idea of integration.	N/A 1 2 3 4 5	N/A 1 2 3 4 5
9. Families of students with disabilities are encouraged to participatein the same classroom events as families of students without disabilities, i.e. room parent, PTA.	N/A 1 2 3 4 5	N/A 1 2 3 4 5
10. Adequate time is allocated for classroom teachers to meet with special education teachers and therapists.	N/A 1 2 3 4 5	N/A 1 2 3 4 5
11. Support is available for classroom teachers when a student with disabilities is placed in the regular classroom.	N/A 1 2 3 4 5	N/A 1 2 3 4 5
12. Supplemental materials are available to address the unique needs and learning styles of students.	N/A 1 2 3 4 5	N/A 1 2 3 4 5
13. Staff development programs integrate the needs of students with disabilities into the content and discussion.	N/A 1 2 3 4 5	N/A 1 2 3 4 5

Open-ended Statements of Concern
about My Role as a REALIGN Facilitator

Name

Years teaching_____
Years participating in Facilitation Development Program_____
Years participating in Facilitation Team Meetings_____

As a trainer-facilitator do you consider yourself to be a
Novice___ intermediate ____advanced ___ old hand____ other_____

Please respond to this in terms of your present concerns about your involvement in the REALIGN facilitation development program.

When you think about your role as facilitator for REALIGN, what are three things you are concerned about? Please do not say what you think others are concerned about, but only what concerns you now. Please write in complete sentences and be frank. Thanks.

1.

2.

3.

Please check the statement that concerns you the most.

Stages of Concern About the Innovation

0 *AWARENESS:* Little concern about or involvement with the innovation is indicated.

1 *INFORMATIONAL:* A general awareness of the innovation and interest in learning more detail about it is indicated. The person seems to be unworried about himself/herself in relation to the innovation. She/he is interested in substantive aspects of the innovation in a selfless manner such as general characteristics, effects, and requirements for use.

2 *PERSONAL:* Individual is uncertain about the demands of the innovation, his/her inadequacy to meet those demands, and his/her role with the innovation. This includes analysis of his/her role in relation to the reward structure of the organization, decision making and consideration of potential conflicts with existing structures or personal commitment. Financial or status implications of the program for self and colleagues may also be reflected.

3 *MANAGEMENT:* Attention is focused on the processes and tasks of using the innovation and the best use of information and resources. Issues related to efficiency, organizing, managing, scheduling, and time demands are utmost.

4 *CONSEQUENCE:* Attention focuses on impact of the innovation on students in his/her immediate sphere of influence. The focus is on relevance of the innovation for students, evaluation of student outcomes, including performance and competencies, and changes needed to increase student outcomes.

5 *COLLABORATION:* The focus is on coordination and cooperation with others regarding use of the innovation.

6 *REFOCUSING:* The focus is on exploration of more universal benefits from the innovation, including the possibility of major changes or replacement with a more powerful alternative. Individual has definite ideas about alternatives to the proposed or existing form of the innovation.

Original concept from Hall, G. E., Wallace, R. C., Jr., & Dossett, W. A. A developmental conceptualization of the adoption process within educational institutions. Austin: Research and Development Center for Teacher Education, The University of Texas, 1973.

REALIGN Personal Learning Plan
June, 1997

I think the 3-5 most important competencies of a REALIGN Facilitator....

My strengths as a facilitator are....

I would like to be more competent as a facilitator in the following areas....

My top priorities for growth <u>next year</u> are.....

Support I need to accomplish this includes....